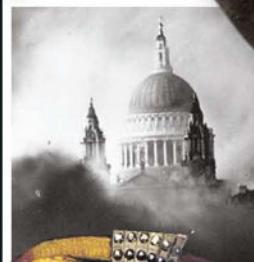




# BRITAIN'S GREATEST BATTLES



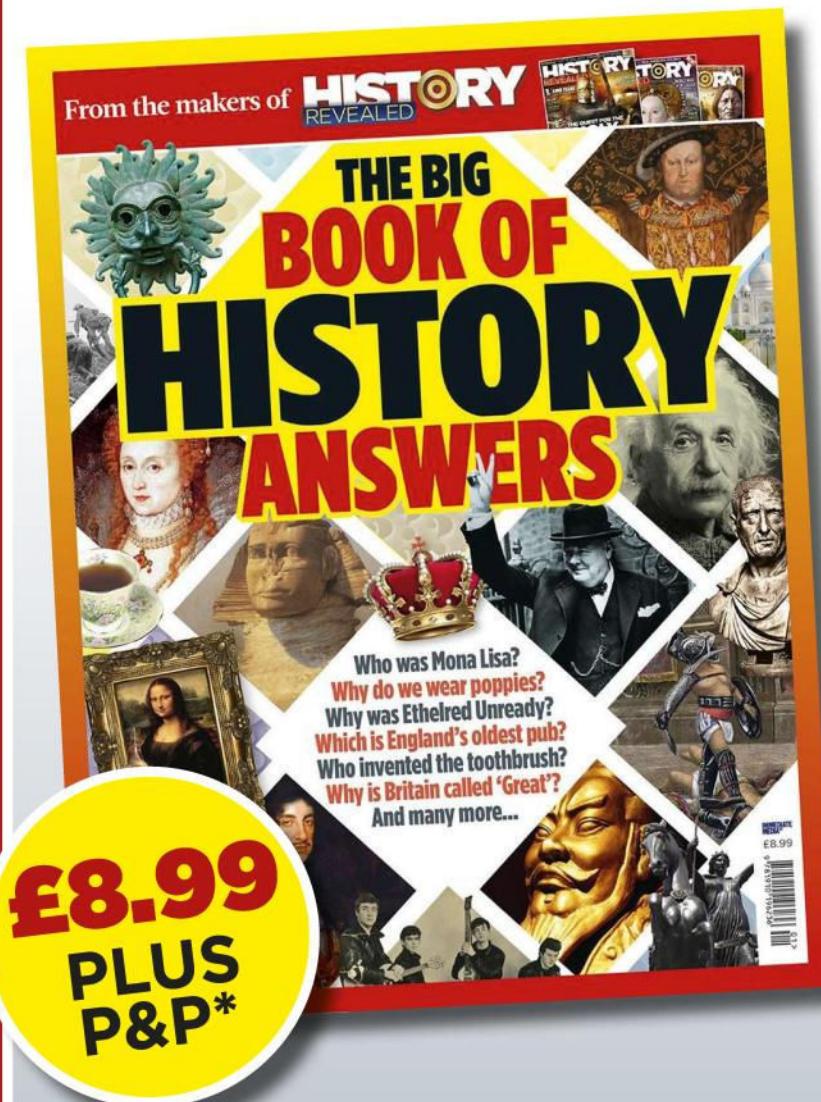
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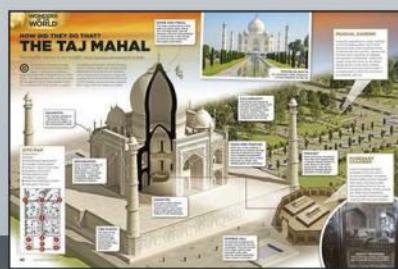
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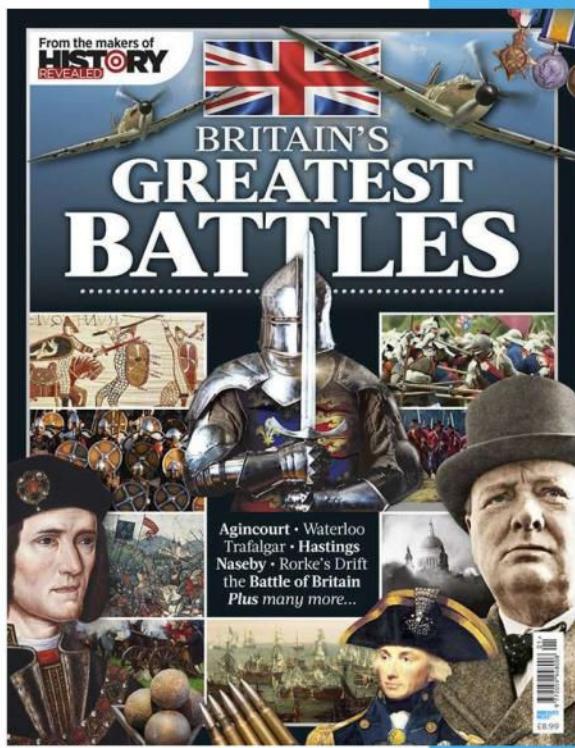
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**Paul McGuinness**  
Editor

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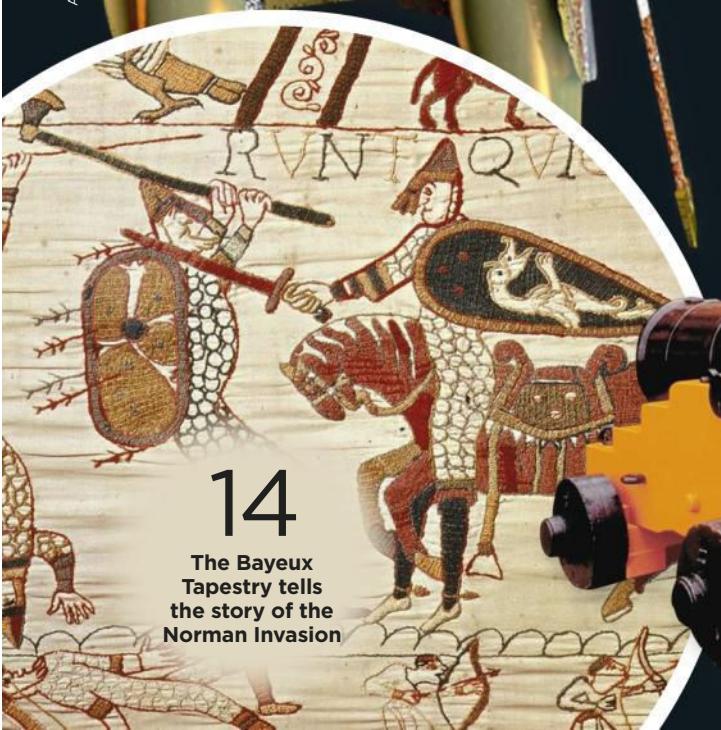
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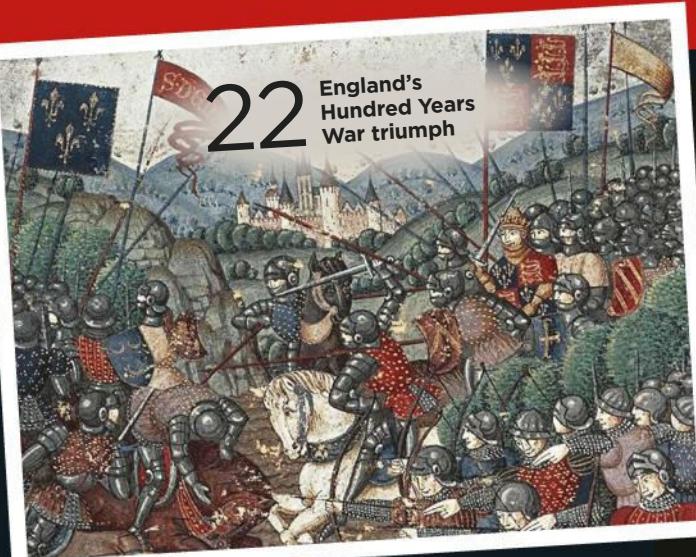
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Edward's army  
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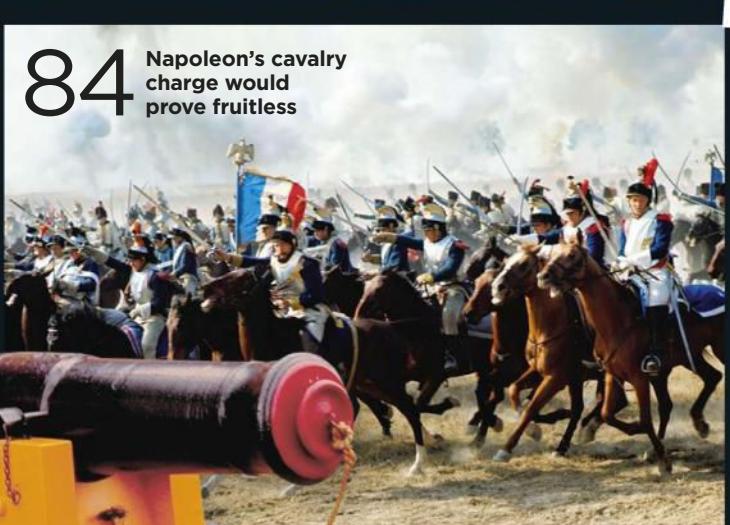
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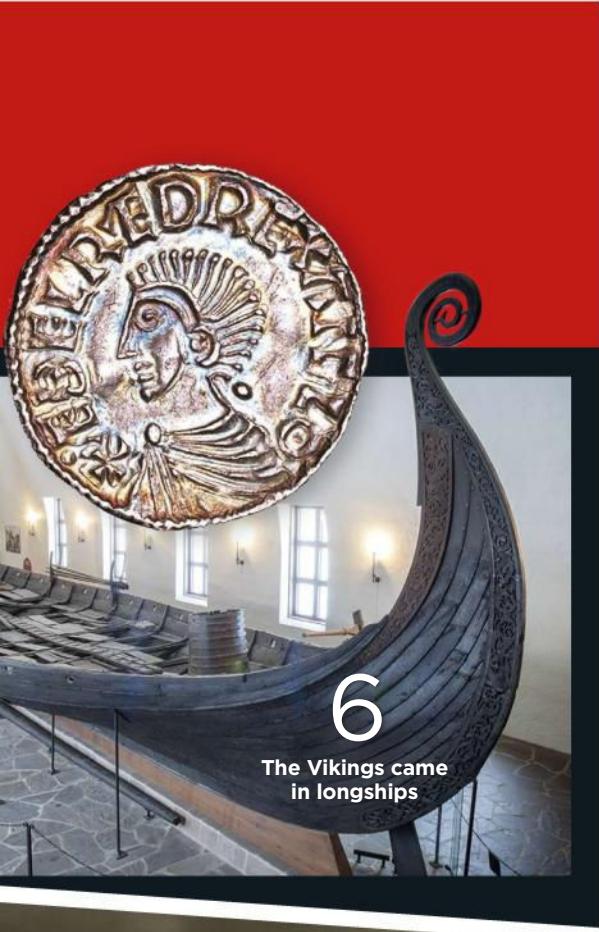
Napoleon's cavalry  
charge would  
prove fruitless



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HMS Victory  
carried 104  
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# Return of the Vikings

With thousands of Viking raiders wreaking havoc along the coast of south-east England, a defensive army was assembled to deal with them on the banks of an Essex river...



## WARRIOR POSE

At the annual Up Helly Aa festival in the Shetlands, Viking re-enactors stand shield-to-shield. The English force at Maldon would have faced a similar, if less glittering, sight

### WOODEN WALL

Typically **both Viking and English** forces fought in tightly packed ranks, behind the protection of a wall of shields.

## BATTLE CONTEXT

### Who

**Vikings** 2,800-5,600 men, possibly led by warrior Svein Forkbeard and/or Olaf Trygvasson

**English** Army size unknown, led by Ealdorman Brihtnoth

### When

10 August AD 991

### Where

Maldon, Essex

### Why

English confront a Viking raiding force

### Outcome

Viking victory

### Losses

Both sides suffered losses and casualties on a great scale. The English force lost its leader, Brihtnoth

**A**lmost as soon as the fleet of Viking ships arrived in the English Channel in AD 991, its crew made clear they weren't on a goodwill mission. Within weeks, they had attacked and plundered Folkestone and Sandwich, and also paid an equally unwelcome visit to Ipswich. By early August, they had sailed up the Blackwater Estuary, and set up camp on Northey Island, where they were threatening the Essex town of Maldon. A prosperous spot with a royal mint, it's not surprising that

Maldon made a tempting target for the Scandinavian raiders.

We don't know for certain who led this Viking raiding force. It may have been Olaf Trygvasson, a Norwegian adventurer who made himself King of Norway, or it might have been the notorious warrior, Svein Forkbeard, King of Denmark. It may, in fact, have been both of them or even someone else but, whoever it was, the raiders presented a threat that couldn't be ignored. It fell to a veteran servant of King Æthelred called Ealdorman Brihtnoth to lead the English response. An 'ealdorman' was a type of noble, responsible

for the defence and government of a particular region, which in Brihtnoth's case was Essex.

### MAN OF REPUTE

Brihtnoth was no spring chicken. He'd been married some 40 years, was instantly recognisable by his tall frame and his shock of snow-white hair, and was a warrior of some repute. On 10 August, he and his troops arrived opposite Northey Island, which was connected to the mainland at low tide by a causeway. Part of his army was made up by his 'hearth troops' - loyal retainers who were given land in exchange for military service - >



## MALDON, AD 991

While the numbers were made up by members of the Essex Fyrd, a form of local militia.

Most of what we believe happened next comes from an epic poem, *The Battle of Maldon*, penned shortly after the event. Having formed up his army in a wall of interlocking shields and ridden up and down the ranks to encourage his men and check their dispositions, Brihtnoth dismounted and took up a position with his retainers in the centre of the line.

The Vikings, too, made ready for battle but, for the time being at least, combat was impossible. The incoming tide had covered the causeway in nearly two metres of water. With nothing to do but wait for the water to ebb, the two sides passed the time in shouted negotiations. The Vikings offered to depart in return for a large sum of money; Brihtnoth refused.

### BATTLE HOUR

Eventually, as the tide receded, the Vikings prepared to advance

across to the mainland, only to find the causeway blocked by a group of English warriors – the verse says just three: Wulfstan, Aelfhere and Maccus. The Vikings were unwilling to risk an all-out attack. Any attempt to fight their way across the causeway would have left them disorganised, turning them into prime targets for an English counter-attack, while a bid to cross elsewhere would have left them floundering in thick Essex mud.

What happened next seems extraordinary.

Instead of trying to attack, the Vikings asked to be allowed to cross to the mainland unopposed and form up there for battle. Brihtnoth agreed. Some writers have criticised him for giving up such an advantageous position and the poem does claim his decision was motivated by overconfidence. In reality, however, there was little else that Brihtnoth could have done. He was in no position to mount an attack of his own across the causeway and,



# 93

The number of ships in the invading Viking fleet that arrived in the English Channel

## ENGLAND'S FINEST EPIC BATTLE POEM

**Maldon** is rare among early English battles in having a near-contemporary source that purports to describe what happened in some detail – an Old English poem known today as *The Battle of Maldon*. The original copy of the poem was destroyed in a fire in the 18th century but, fortunately, a copy had been made. Its beginning and end have been lost, but 325 lines survive, and they provide much useful information about where the fight took place and details of the day's events.

## WHO WERE THE VIKINGS?

'Vikings' is the collective term used to describe the Scandinavian seafarers who began attacking the British Isles at the end of the eighth century AD. Their initial raids developed into settlement and attempts at conquest. In the 860s and 870s AD, a vast Viking army conquered Northumbria, East Anglia and Mercia before being stopped by King Alfred the Great of Wessex and his successors.

Scandinavian influence was largely restricted to the North and the East Midlands, where place names ending in 'by' and 'thorpe' are often indicators of Viking settlement. The raids resumed at the end of the tenth century and, as before, developed into attempts at conquest. This time they were successful and, from 1016–42, England was ruled by Danish monarchs, first Cnut and then his sons Harold Harefoot and Harthacnut.

## FIGHT SITE

Although there were many Viking and Anglo-Saxon clashes, most of them were not well documented, so their battlefields remain unknown. The fact that it's known, to a certain degree of accuracy, where the Maldon battle took place, makes the fight unique.



## VIKING LONGSHIP

Despite having relatively shallow keels, which meant they could be rowed inland up rivers, Viking longships were remarkably seaworthy. There were two typical types, carrying 30 or 60 men.



### SHIP SHAPE

The Oseberg ship, on display in Oslo, Norway, is one of the best-preserved Viking longships



### FEAR TACTICS

Innocent men, women and children are shown no mercy in this 19th-century depiction of a Viking raid



### RAVEN BANNER

The raven was a popular symbol among the Vikings. It is thought to represent Odin, their god of war.

## BATTLE READY

Both the English and Viking warriors had similar equipment and weapons – including spears, bows, axes and swords – and their tactics were also broadly the same.

A popular fighting formation was to create a line of overlapping shields known as a shield wall. For a targeted attack, warriors might adopt the *swinfylka* or ‘swine array’, a wedge-shaped formation designed to punch a hole through enemy ranks, and the Vikings may well have done this at Maldon.

Despite the popular image of the Vikings as hairy hooligans in horned helmets there’s no evidence their headgear ever had horns and, as the large number of ornate combs found on Viking sites suggests, they probably took great care over their looks.

### HELMET

Contrary to the folk stories, their helmets did not have horns. They were made of iron and were conical.

### DAGGER

This double-edged blade was 20-50cm long.

### AXE

This was the Vikings’ favourite weapon. The handle could be a metre long, which gave more force to the blow.

### SWORD

A simple, double-edged weapon, this was used to knock down their enemies and then stab them.



### LAYER UP

Beneath a coat of mail called a *byrnie*, the Vikings wore a layer of padding and a loose tunic called a *kyrill*, which would have been decorated with knots around the neck.

### CAPE

Made of thick wool, the cape kept the warrior warm and offered protection from knives.





had he refused to let the Vikings cross, they would probably have waited until high tide, returned to their ships and sailed off to raid elsewhere. This was Brihtnoth's best chance to defeat the Vikings in battle and put a stop to their raiding. He pulled back his army and the Vikings advanced unmolested onto the mainland.

The size of the two rival armies isn't known. At that time Viking ships tended to be of two types: one carrying 30 and the other 60 men. If the Anglo-Saxon chronicle was correct in saying the Vikings had 93 ships, then their army would have numbered between 2,800 men and 5,600 men, although this assumes all the ships were fully manned when they left Scandinavia and takes no account of losses suffered in earlier raids. One can only speculate that, because Brihtnoth was prepared to offer battle, his army must have been at least the same size as that of his Viking enemies.

### "BITTER WAS THE BATTLE-RUSH"

The clash began with an exchange of arrows, before the Vikings launched their onslaught against the English shield wall. Both sides hurled javelins at their enemies before closing in with spears, axes and swords. As blades clashed, spears thrust and wooden shields

splintered, the battle degenerated into a series of bloody hand-to-hand contests.

Leaders in those days were expected to fight at the front, and Brihtnoth was no exception. According to the poem he was twice hit by spears but still managed to kill two Vikings before a third disabled his sword arm. As Brihtnoth sank to the ground,

still encouraging his men, the Vikings moved in for the kill, hacking him to death and cutting off the old warrior's head to carry away as a grisly trophy. The fall of their leader seems to have broken the resolve of the English, many of whom left their ranks and made for the safety of the nearby woods.

The poem puts much of the blame for the flight on an English warrior called Godric, who is described as leaping onto Brihtnoth's horse and riding off. Believing it was in fact Brihtnoth who was fleeing, many of the English ran away as well. But not all fled:

*"Here lies our leader all cut to pieces...  
I will not leave,  
But alongside my own Lord, I  
Mean to lie."*

Brihtnoth's hearth troops fought to the death around the body of their fallen leader. They took such a heavy toll of the

**10,000**

The value, in pounds, of the sum paid to the Vikings after the battle

### ENGLAND'S WORST KING?

Æthelred II became king at the age of 12, following the murder of his half-brother Edward in AD 978. Within two years, the Vikings resumed their raids upon England. The attacks increased in scale until their aim was no longer the acquisition of booty but the conquest of all England. Æthelred had no real answer and, by the time he died in 1016, his kingdom was disunited and completely at the mercy of the Danes. Æthelred's nickname 'the unready' is in fact a corruption of *unraed*, a rather appropriate 12th-century play on his name meaning unadvised or ill-advised.



#### PENNY PROFILE

A rare coin from the reign of Æthelred 'the Unready'

## "As Brihtnoth sank to the ground, the Vikings moved in for the kill"

victorious Vikings that it was said the Scandinavians barely had enough men to man their ships, let alone attack Maldon.

Even so, the Vikings held the upper hand, and the worried English leadership adopted a



#### SECURITY PAYMENT

The Anglo-Saxons cough up a Danegeld to get rid of the raiders

But, in 1002 he made a major mistake: he ordered the massacre of Danish settlers in England. This further split an already fractured kingdom. Finally, in October 1016, Svein's son Cnut defeated Æthelred's successor, Edmund Ironside, at Ashington in Essex and was soon accepted as king of all England.

tactic that would soon become an established way to deal with the threat. They bought the raiders off with a large sum of money known as Danegeld. The Vikings returned home with £10,000 in cash and, it seems, the head of Ealdorman Brihtnoth. For, when Brihtnoth's tomb in Ely Cathedral was opened in the 18th century, it contained a skeleton but, where there should have been a skull there was just a ball of wax. ◎

#### GET HOOKED!

Find out more about the battle and those involved

#### READ THE POEM

A translation of *The Battle of Maldon* poem, authored by Wilfrid Berridge, is available online. Visit [www.battleofmaldon.org.uk](http://www.battleofmaldon.org.uk) to have a read.

#### SITE OF BATTLE

The site of the action is found less than a mile's stroll along the riverbank from central Maldon. Bear in mind, though, that prior arrangement to visit Northey Island will be needed, as it is now a National Trust bird sanctuary.

## WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

The Vikings were thirsty for more...

The big danger of paying Danegeld to the Scandinavians was, of course, that it might encourage them to come back for more. And this is exactly what happened. As time went on, the English had to pay ever-increasing sums of money in order to gain a respite from Viking attacks. But Æthelred was never able to use the time he'd bought effectively.

Although he tried to build up England's defences and

strengthen his navy, Æthelred's regime was riddled with corruption, and he was facing enemy armies of a size never previously encountered.

Unable to defeat his enemies militarily, Æthelred turned to diplomacy. He wed Emma of Normandy in a bid to deny the Danes use of Normandy's harbours. He also set Olaf Trygvasson against Svein Forkbeard by encouraging him to claim the throne of Norway.



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# 1854 CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

This, one of the earliest photographs ever taken of a battle scene, is believed to show the aftermath of the Charge of the Light Brigade. "When can their glory fade? O the wild charge they made!" So wrote the Poet Laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson, in his poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, which celebrated the heroic bravery of those involved, while noting that the charge was ultimately futile, thanks to controversial orders.

Taking place at the Battle of Balaclava, during the Crimean War, the order for the Light Brigade to charge was the result of, at best, a breakdown in communication, leading to 110 British soldiers being killed, and 161 wounded when they charged at a Russian artillery battery on 25 October 1854.







# 1066: the Normans came, they saw, and they conquered

The Norman conquest and the infamous **Battle of Hastings** saw two leaders bring their armies together to fight for the throne of England...

**H**arold may have hoped to catch the Normans by surprise at Hastings that October morning. If so, he was to be disappointed. William's scouts had warned their Duke of the enemy's approach and the Normans were themselves advancing. Harold abandoned his attack plans, and took up a defensive position on Senlac Hill, where he waited for the Normans to come to him.

## CLOSE FIGHT

Some of William's army seems to have deployed into three bodies, with Bretons on the left, soldiers from France, Flanders and Picardy on the right and his own Norman troops in the centre. Although the Bayeux Tapestry makes much of the Norman knights, it's worth remembering that its creators would have sought to appeal to an aristocratic audience – in fact a substantial part of William's army were foot soldiers, with archers and crossbowmen in the front ranks and heavy infantry behind

them. The cavalry were deployed to the rear. Clearly the intention was to soften up the English lines with archery, before the infantry and cavalry moved in to finish the job.

But Harold's men proved tough nuts to crack. William's chaplain gives a good first-hand account: "The Duke and his men... came slowly up the hill... the Norman



## BATTLE CONTEXT

**Date**  
14 October 1066

**Location**  
Senlac Hill, Sussex, 7 miles north west of Hastings

**Terrain**  
A steep ridge above areas of marsh

**Forces**  
**British** Possibly up to 8,000  
**Normans** Unknown but probably over 8,000

**Outcome**  
A decisive victory for the Normans and the death of King Harold



**ICONIC BATTLE**  
Thousands of men, from nobles to peasants, slug it out, in a battle that will leave England changed forever



### TIRED TROOPS

Harold's soldiers were weary – many had **marched from London**, and there was **little time to rest** before the battle began.

### WAR READY

According to one source, the Normans spent the **night before the battle** praying and confessing their sins, while the English spent it **drinking and carousing**.



## HASTINGS, 1066

foot drawing nearer provoked the English by raining death and wounds upon them with their missiles. But the English resisted valiantly... they hurled back spears and javelins and weapons of all kinds together with axes and stones fastened to pieces of wood... The English had the advantage of the ground and profited by remaining within their position in close order... and most of all from the manner in which their weapons found easy passage through the shields and armour of their enemies."

Some of these weapons must have been the fearsome two-handed axes illustrated in the Bayeux Tapestry. Suddenly, part of William's army, possibly the Bretons on the left, gave way. They poured back down the slope pursued by some of Harold's men. Soon, William's army was in danger of collapse and matters weren't helped by a rumour that the Duke himself had been killed. William acted swiftly. Riding among his men, he pushed back his helmet to show he was still alive. His men rallied, turned on their pursuers and cut them down. Indeed, it is possible that after this the Normans actually used the tactic of a feigned retreat to draw more English down from the hill.

### END IN SIGHT

The Normans kept up the pressure. Casualties mounted on both sides and Harold's brothers, Gyrth and Leofwine, were both slain. As evening approached, William may have ordered his archers to shoot their arrows into the air, to hit the unarmoured English in the rear ranks. In the end, the relentless combination of archery, infantry and cavalry attacks seems to have thinned the English ranks sufficiently for the Norman knights to break through the shield wall. Harold, possibly struck in the eye by an arrow (the earliest accounts of the battle make no mention of this), was hacked to pieces and the English line disintegrated. Although some may have made a last stand near a ravine called the Malfosse or 'evil ditch', for the English, the day was lost. ☀



# 250

The distance in miles travelled by Harold from Stamford Bridge to Hastings

**FIRST FIGHT**  
King Harold defeats Harald Hardrada, a pretender to the English throne from Norway, less than a month before the Hastings conflict

### SECOND SON

Harold became his **father's heir** after his elder brother, Sweyn, was exiled for **abducting** an abbess and **killing** his cousin.

## BATTLE CONTEXT

As soon as Harold was named King of England, William the Conqueror wanted to knock him off his throne. But he'd have to get in line...

William of Normandy was furious when Harold Godwinson was crowned King of England in January 1066. As far as he was concerned, the fact that a dying Edward the Confessor may have named Harold as his successor did not invalidate Edward's earlier promise to leave the throne to him. Nor did it affect Harold's oath, probably sworn in 1064, to help William's succession come about. William gathered support for an invasion, and assembled a fleet to cross the Channel.

In fact, the first challenge to Harold's kingship came from Scandinavia. In September, another claimant to the throne, King Harald Hardrada of Norway, had crossed the North Sea. Joined by Harold's own brother Tostig, he defeated two of Harold's allies at Fulford outside York. Harold rushed north and on 25 September he surprised the Norsemen at Stamford Bridge. He destroyed their army, killing both Hardrada and Tostig.

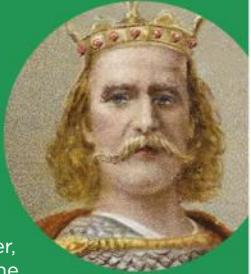
But Harold had little chance to enjoy the fruits of victory, for on

1 October, he heard that William had landed at Pevensey in Sussex. In order to deny him time to raise more troops, William wanted to bring Harold to battle as soon as possible. To provoke him into fighting he ravaged the country around Hastings. The plan worked. Harold hurried south, stopping for only a few days in London to pick up more troops. On 11 October, after sending out a fleet to cut off the Norman retreat, he marched on Hastings, perhaps hoping to catch William off guard.

# THE MAIN PLAYERS

## THE ENGLISH

### HAROLD II



The son of the powerful Earl Godwin of Wessex and Gytha, the sister-in-law of King Cnut. A daring and experienced soldier, he had defeated the Welsh in 1063.

### GYRTH & LEOFWINE

Harold's younger brothers. They held land in East Anglia and the south east respectively. Both were killed at Hastings.

## THE NORMANS

### WILLIAM OF NORMANDY



The illegitimate son of Duke Robert of Normandy. He succeeded his father at the age of eight, and held on to his title in the face of rebellions and invasions. He ruled England from 1066 until his death in 1087.

### ODO OF BAYEUX

William's half-brother and Bishop of Bayeux, he fought at Hastings and was later made Earl of Kent. He died on crusade in 1097.

## THE VIKINGS

### HARALD HARDRADA



A warrior who became King of Norway in 1047. His claim to the English throne was based on an old promise supposedly made by King Harthacnut of England. He was killed at Stamford Bridge.

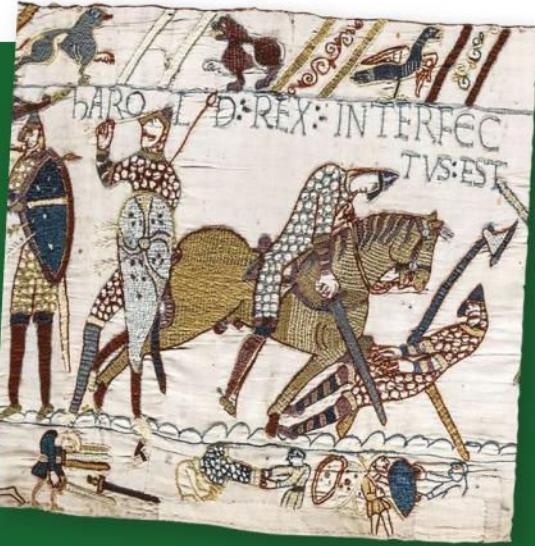
### TOSTIG

Brother of Harold and Earl of Northumbria, he was exiled after a rebellion against his harsh rule. He sided with Hardrada and died at Stamford Bridge.

## THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY

The Bayeux Tapestry depicts, from a Norman point of view, the events leading up to the Norman invasion and the Battle of Hastings itself. It's a priceless account, but it has most likely been altered over time. For example, an 18th-century engraving of the Tapestry shows that the figure with an arrow in his eye – often

considered to be Harold – was originally clutching what may be a javelin. It seems that 19th-century restorers, believing that Harold was killed by an arrow, altered the Tapestry accordingly. In fact, Harold may well be the next figure along, being cut down by a mounted knight.



## THE FIGHTERS

This battle saw leaders and commoners lay down their lives

### WARRIOR MEN

Many of the fiercest fighters would have been the English Huscarls. Professional militiamen, they were highly qualified and experienced soldiers.

### RURAL RECRUITS

Peasant farmers were often called upon for military service in times of war. While their training was minimal, they were an effective force.

### LIVING THE BATTLE

Thousands of re-enactors don Norman and Saxon gear to recreate the conflict at Hastings



### DEADLY KNIGHTS

The French had nobility in their ranks – mounted on horseback, well-equipped and highly skilled, William's knights could be devastating against troops caught in the open.

## HASTINGS, 1066



## WEAPONRY AND ARMOUR

High status soldiers on both sides wore long mail shirts, known as hauberks by the Normans and byrnies by the English. The English fyrdsmen were expected to bring their own arms and equipment on campaign, so some may have had mail armour while others would have been equipped with nothing more than a shield and spear. William's archers almost certainly wore no armour, other than perhaps a leather cap.

### TWO-HANDED AXE

Feared weapon of the huscarls. Of Danish origin, it could cleave through muscle and bone but left the user exposed to spear or sword thrusts, so axemen may have fought alongside shield bearers who protected them.

### SWORD

Swords were not universally carried as they were expensive, high-status weapons, often passed from father to son. Normally made from a combination of iron and steel, they were mainly used for hacking and slashing.

### KITE-SHAPED SHIELD

Made from planks of wood covered in cowhide. The shape was designed to protect the legs of a mounted soldier, although the Bayeux Tapestry shows them also being carried by English foot soldiers.

### BOW & ARROWS

The Bayeux Tapestry suggests that bows and arrows were employed in great numbers by the Normans. Crossbows were also used – slower to load, but with greater power.

### ROUND SHIELD

The metal boss in the centre protected the bearer's hand but also enabled the shield to be used as a punching weapon.

### LONG MAIL SHIRT

Made from thousands of interlocking rings of mail. Worn over padding, it offered good defence against cuts and thrusts but was less effective against percussive blows.

70

Approximate length in metres of the Bayeux Tapestry today. Originally it may have been longer.

## THE NORMAN CONQUEST

What began as a struggle over who should rule England turned out to have consequences for the country as a whole. The Norman conquest led to closer political and economic ties with north-west Europe,

extensive reforms to the Church, and the replacement of the old ruling class by a new French-speaking elite. This can still be seen (or heard) in our language today – note how milk is an English word while cream is French, and that animals' names are English in origin when they're on the farm (for example pig) but French when they're on the table (pork).

### BUTCHERING THE LANGUAGE

The Normans changed the English language, especially words about food



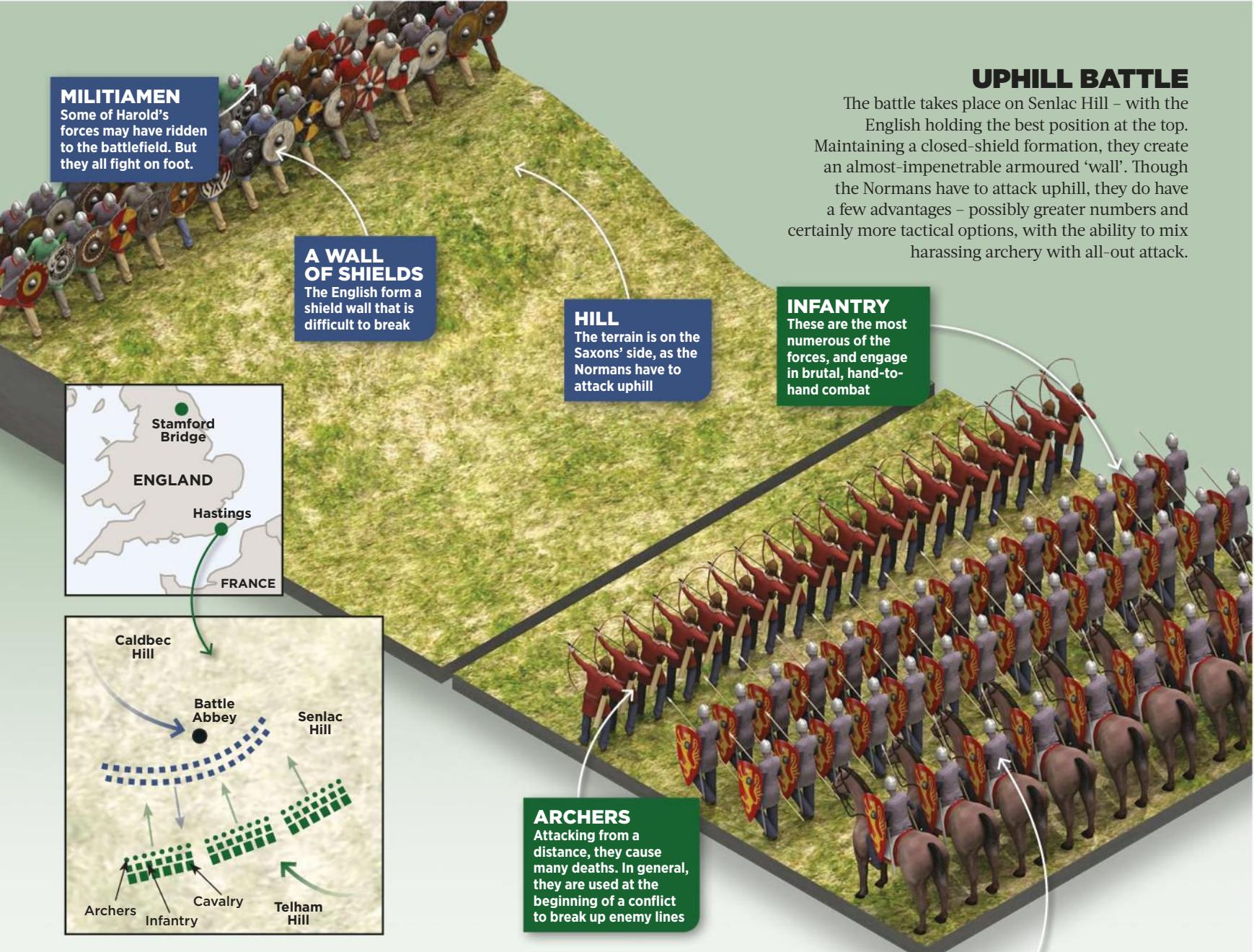
### ECCLESIASTICAL CLUE

The site has, perhaps, one of England's greatest war memorials – Battle Abbey

## WHERE, EXACTLY, WAS THE BATTLE FOUGHT?

Battle Abbey is a key piece of evidence. The *Peterborough Chronicle* says: "On the very spot where God granted him the conquest of England he [William] caused a great Abbey to be built." A *Time Team* investigation looked into claims that the battle

was fought elsewhere. The experts were not convinced. It concluded that Senlac Hill was an excellent defensive position, and suggested that a spot (now a roundabout) only about 100 metres east of Battle Abbey was the likely centre of action.



## WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

He might have beaten Harold and his army, but it would be a long time before William would win over England...

William wasn't to enter London for another two months. After resting at Hastings, his army captured Dover and then, following a pause to recover from an outbreak of dysentery, took Canterbury.

When a detachment of William's cavalry found London Bridge heavily defended, William opted against a full-blown assault on the capital. He instead embarked on a destructive march through nearby Surrey and Hampshire. Burning and pillaging towns as they went, his troops captured the royal treasure at Winchester. By mid-November,

William's troops had crossed the Thames and were based at Wallingford.

Within England's ranks, a new king was suggested – the young Edgar Atheling, a grandson of the earlier ruler, King Edmund II. Edgar was proclaimed the monarch, but without the leadership of Harold Godwinson's powerful family, the English resistance rapidly began to crumble. Prominent nobles and powerful clergymen deserted Edgar, fleeing the capital. Come mid-December the remaining English leaders in London submitted to William at Berkhamsted.

On Christmas Day 1066, William was crowned King of England in Westminster Abbey. Mistaking shouts of acclamation for a burgeoning riot, his soldiers set fire to the surrounding buildings. The service was concluded amidst clouds of smoke, the new King shaking like a leaf.

It was to take another five years of brutal campaigning, especially in the north, before William was able to establish control over all of England. However, their defeat at Hastings had cost the English their best chance of stopping the invasion in its tracks.

## UPHILL BATTLE

The battle takes place on Senlac Hill – with the English holding the best position at the top. Maintaining a closed-shield formation, they create an almost-impenetrable armoured 'wall'. Though the Normans have to attack uphill, they do have a few advantages – possibly greater numbers and certainly more tactical options, with the ability to mix harassing archery with all-out attack.

### GET HOOKED!

Find out more about the battle and its legacy

### VISIT THE BATTLEFIELD

Battle Abbey was built on the site of the conflict, on the order of William the Conqueror. Along with the surviving parts of the battlefield and the accompanying museum, you can also explore the atmospheric abbey remains, which are now in the care of English Heritage. [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)



# 1899 CHURCHILL'S GREAT ESCAPE

A reporter with the British army in the Colony of Natal (today part of South Africa), Winston Churchill (*far right*) was captured as a prisoner of war in November 1899 while covering the Boer Wars.

Although not an officer, Churchill's landed background made him a valuable prize to the Boers. However, within a matter of weeks of his imprisonment at the POW camp, the future Prime Minister had escaped, making his way to Mozambique. His story soon spread, and he was treated as a conquering hero on his arrival in Durban.





## THE BATTLE OF AGINCOURT

### TRAINED TO KILL

Archery practice was **required by law** in England as early as the 13th century. As such, the peasant-troops were highly skilled and **lethal, but also cheap**.

**BAND OF BROTHERS**  
Fighters get into the thick of the action at a re-enactment of the Battle of Agincourt



# THE BATTLE OF AGINCOURT

On 25 October 1415, around 7,000 English troops won a momentous victory on French soil. In the 600 years since, the events of the day have all-but become legend. Read on to discover what really happened...



**ENGLAND V FRANCE**  
Fighting gets underway  
in this 15th-century  
manuscript illumination  
RIGHT: The battle plan  
drawn up by the French,  
which is now kept at the  
British Library

**C**rossing a muddy field in Picardy, an elderly, white-haired man in plate armour rode in front of a small English army. He bellowed an order and hurled his baton into the air as a signal. The man was Sir Thomas Erpingham, it was the morning of St Crispin's Day 1415, and the place was Agincourt. One of the most famous battles in history was about to begin.

The English were not in the best shape to fight that grey day in late October. A little over a fortnight earlier, they had set off from the Normandy town of Harfleur, which they had just captured from the French, to march to the English base at Calais. But now their way was blocked by a much larger French army, which had shadowed them all the way. The English were tired, hungry and many were suffering from dysentery – a deadly disease that had already claimed thousands of their comrades.

## RISKY MANOEUVRE

In fact, the gruelling march had not been strictly necessary. The English could have travelled by boat and, when the English leader King Henry V announced his intention to march, his councillors tried to dissuade him from the risky manoeuvre. But Henry had made up his mind. He had invaded France in support of his claim to the French throne and he wanted to make a point. By marching through France, he would demonstrate that he was a force to be reckoned with, and that his claim had to be taken seriously. Now he'd have to prove it.

Henry drew up his small army, perhaps 7,000 men in all, where the Calais road passed through fields that were hemmed in on both

sides by thick woodland. Rain had been pouring down for several days, turning the newly-ploughed fields into seas of mud.

Henry's men-at-arms were drawn up in three 'battles' or divisions, with the Duke of York in command on the right, Lord de Camoys on the left and the King himself in the centre. The archers were probably mostly deployed on the wings, with some stationed between the divisions of men-at-arms. Each archer carried a sharp wooden stake, which he hammered into the ground in front of him as a barrier against cavalry. With the army's flanks protected by the thick woods, it was strong a defensive position.

As they waited for the enemy to make their move, his soldiers carried out their customary pre-battle ritual, making the sign of the cross on the ground and taking a small piece of earth

## LEAN AND MEAN

Henry's exhausted troops had marched 260 miles in 17 days to reach Agincourt, on only eight days' food rations,

within bowshot range of them.

When Erpingham shouted his order (probably "now strike") and threw his baton, the archers pulled up their stakes, the men-at-arms raised their banners and the whole English army picked its way through the mud towards the enemy. When they got to within about 200 metres of the French they stopped, the archers replanted their stakes and started shooting volleys of arrows into the tightly-packed enemy ranks. The plan worked perfectly. Under the pressure of fire, the French – who were deployed in three divisions, one behind the other – moved forward to attack.

## THE HOME TEAM

The French had given the battle some thought, and devised a battle plan, which still survives

# "WHEN THE FRENCH SHOWED NO SIGN OF MOVING, HENRY HAD TO TAKE ACTION."

in their mouths. But 1,000 metres away, the large French army showed no sign of moving. Henry realised he had to take action. Retreat to Harfleur wasn't an option but, if he stayed where he was, his enemies would just get stronger as more troops arrived, while his own army would weaken as hunger and disease took their toll. In order to goad the French into attack, the decision was taken to march

in the British Library. Put simply, the idea was to dismount most of their men-at-arms and knights, and support them with missile fire from archers and crossbowmen on the flanks and to the front. Some of the men-at-arms would remain mounted and, while the body of the army attacked on foot, they would ride round to attack the English archers on the flanks. It was sound enough, in theory.

# BARD'S EYE VIEW

## William Shakespeare's *Henry V*

Written in 1599 at the end of Elizabeth's reign, *Henry V* is, arguably, Shakespeare's most patriotic play. His chief sources were probably the chronicles of a Tudor historian named Ralph Holinshed, together with an anonymous Elizabethan play called *The Famous Victories of Henry V*.

The Bard's Henry is very much the model king: firm, courageous, inspiring and, in his wooing of Princess Catherine (a completely fictitious scene), romantic. In his St Crispin's Day speech, Henry is the personification of England's view of itself – the small island that battles courageously against seemingly impossible odds. Shakespeare's Henry is also ruthless, not least in his threat to slaughter everyone in Harfleur if the town doesn't surrender, although Elizabethans would have been far less shocked by this than a modern audience (in 1575, the English had killed everyone they found on Rathlin Island, 600 men, women and children, to the approval of the Queen herself).

The Battle of Agincourt is the centrepiece of the whole play. The Treaty of Troyes and Henry's marriage to Catherine of Valois are seen as the direct result of the battle and it's as if the hard campaigning and siege warfare of Henry's second, decisive invasion of France never took place. Shakespeare pokes fun at the arrogant, overconfident French and vastly exaggerates both the size of their army and the losses they suffered in the battle. Meanwhile, he minimises the English casualties, putting them at just 29 dead of which only four were "of name". Henry's famous archers don't feature in the play at all and neither do their weapons. Swords, cudgels, daggers, pikes and even guns all get mentioned, but the longbow is nowhere to be found.

**GOD FOR HARRY, ENGLAND, AND SAINT GEORGE!**

Mark Rylance (*Wolf Hall*) takes the lead in *Henry V*, at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, London



## THREE HENRYS The Elizabethan play on the screen...

### Laurence Olivier (1944)

Filmed during World War II at a time when the exploits of the Few in the Battle of Britain were fresh in the mind, and released at the time of the D-Day landings, Olivier's production was intended to boost morale on the Home Front. It's unashamedly patriotic with stunning battle scenes and a memorable score by William Walton.



#### PROPAGANDA

Olivier made this film on **Winston Churchill's request**. A lot of historical accuracy was sacrificed in the making of what some see as a piece of propaganda.

### Kenneth Branagh (1989)

Branagh's Henry is blunt, tough and energetic, with an ability to inspire the men serving under him. There's no pomp and pageantry in this gritty adaptation, and the extensive battle scenes are full of mud, blood, tears and sweat. Henry V will always be a patriotic play, but Branagh ensures the cost of that patriotism is not overlooked.



### Tom Hiddleston (2012)

Hiddleston gives us an introspective Henry, racked with self-doubt. The TV format allows him to play the role in a way that would never be possible on the stage and, rather than roaring out his pre-battle speech to a packed army, he delivers it in an almost conversational manner, to a small group of followers.



## THE BATTLE OF AGINCOURT

In practice, the plan was problematic. One of the issues was the ground itself. The narrowness of the battlefield, thanks to the thick woods on each side, meant that there simply wasn't the room to make the planned flanking movements against Henry's archers, who were, in any case, protected by the wooden stakes they'd brought. Furthermore, they had no clear commander-in-chief, so there was little discipline. Eager nobles and knights barged past the French archers and crossbowmen to reach the action. Indeed, eventually there were so many noblemen in the front line that, it's said, their banners flapped in everyone's faces and had to be furled and taken to the rear.

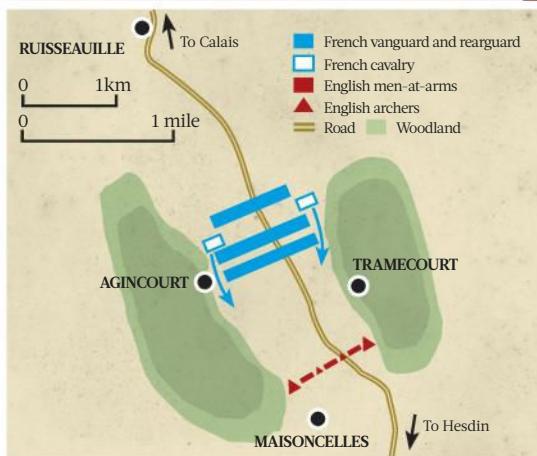
### ARROW STORM

As the French advanced, those mounted troops who were in position rode forward to attack, but the result was a fiasco. Met by a hail of arrows, the horsemen were slowed down by the boggy ground before being totally halted by the pointed stakes the archers had planted. While a good piece of armour would keep out an arrow shot (unless fired from the closest range), with thousands of missiles falling every minute, some of them were bound to find a weak spot – whether an unprotected part of the body or the eye slit of a visor.

The horses suffered particularly badly. Some keeled over, tumbling their riders into the quagmire while others, maddened by wounds, galloped wildly across the battlefield. Soon, the French mounted troops were streaming



**MARCH TO AGINCOURT**  
The routes the two armies took before battle



**PLAN OF ATTACK**  
Each side's starting positions

### GOD ON SIDE

After the battle, it was widely believed that God had been **on Henry's side**. Several French soldiers even claimed to have seen **St George** appear on the field, fighting with the English.



# “SOME HORSES, MADDENED BY WOUNDS, GALLOPED WILDLY ACROSS THE BATTLEFIELD”

## THE KILL COMMAND

Was Henry's order a war crime?

A knight who was taken prisoner in medieval battle could normally expect to be well treated by his captors. He was worth looking after, as he could be ransomed back to his own side for a good sum of money and in, any case, the captors would hope for similarly good treatment if they were taken prisoner themselves. King John II of France was treated as an honoured guest by the English after his capture at Poitiers in 1356, but if the hundreds of knights who surrendered to the English at Agincourt were hoping for similar treatment, some of them were in for a shock. Concerned about the large numbers of captured

Frenchmen milling about behind his army, and alarmed about a possible final French attack, Henry V ordered their immediate execution and a company of archers under the command of a squire were sent to do the grisly work. The slaughter stopped when it became clear that the French were retreating, but not before hundreds had been killed (and hundreds of potential ransoms lost). Some modern writers have attempted to portray the killings as a 'war crime' but contemporaries did not see it that way. Instead, they blamed the French for forcing him to do it by refusing to accept their defeat.

1.5–2

The height, in metres, of the piles of French dead and wounded that accumulated at the English line

back in confusion – straight into the first division of dismounted men,

which was now closing in on the English line. Struggling through the mud, which had been further churned up by the hooves of their comrades' horses they, too, came under fire from the English archers on the flanks, causing them to bunch up as they advanced. Matters were made worse by the fact that, as they approached the English, the area between the two woods narrowed, further compressing their ranks. By the time they reached the English lines they were exhausted, disorganised and so crowded that some were unable to wield their weapons properly. Even so, through sheer weight of numbers, they temporarily pushed the English back.

The Duke of York was killed – either from a wound to the head or from "heat and pressing" as one account put it. Henry came under attack,

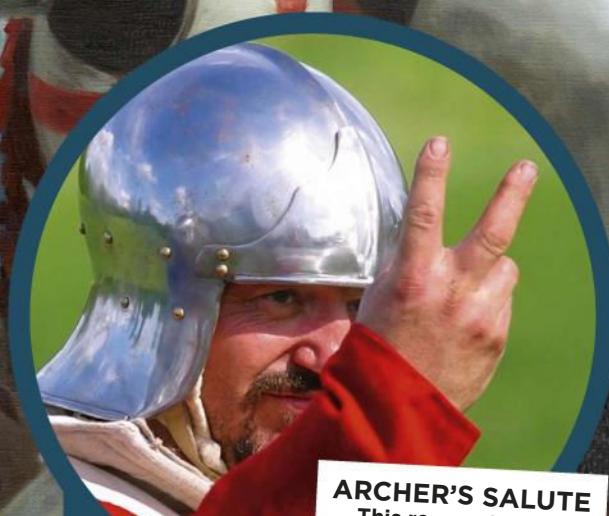


#### ACTIONS AND WORDS

MAIN: Hand-to-hand combat breaks out on the field, while English arrows continue to fly  
LEFT: Henry's troops pray in thanks after their victory

#### DEAD HEAT

The suits of plate armour were stiflingly hot - so much so that one English knight, Edward, Duke of York may have **died from heat exposure**.



**ARCHER'S SALUTE**  
This re-enactor has the right attitude, even if his signal is not totally accurate

receiving a blow that dented his helmet and struck off part of the coronet he was wearing. Some accounts say he saved the life of the wounded Duke of Gloucester, straddling his prostrate body and fighting off his attackers. Somehow the invaders' line held.

By now, the English archers had loosed all their arrows and they joined in the hand-to-hand fighting, many using the mallets they'd used to drive in their stakes as weapons. As they battered the armour of their French enemies, who were hampered by the crush, the second French division tried to enter the fray. Anyone who lost his footing had little chance of getting up again and soon the bodies were piling up, some dead, some wounded, some simply unable to move. One of these was the Duke of Orléans, who was pulled from under a pile of bodies, recognised as someone worth saving and sent as a prisoner to the rear of the English line.

Shattered and, with their chance of retreat cut off by the mass of men behind them, more and more French nobles, knights and men-at-arms in the front ranks tried to surrender to the English. Not all were successful. The Duke

of Alençon, the man credited by some with denting the King's helmet, tried to surrender to Henry himself, only to be cut down by one of the King's bodyguards.

#### TACTICAL MASSACRE

Within two hours of the start of the battle it was clear that the English had won, and the French began streaming back in retreat. However, the third division of the French army remained uncommitted. Concerned that it might still join the battle and alarmed by reports that his baggage train had come under attack, Henry gave his infamous order that the substantial number of French prisoners who were being kept behind his lines should be put to the sword (see The Kill Command, left).

Only the richest and most valuable were spared, for ransom purposes. Among the victims was the Duke of Brabant, a Burgundian who had arrived late to the battlefield. Keen to join the action, he had hastily dressed in borrowed armour and an improvised surcoat made from a trumpeter's flag. When the order to kill the prisoners was issued, his throat was cut by the English, who were unable to

## FLICKING THE VS

The archer's rude gesture of choice?

It's often claimed that the 'V' sign originated in the Hundred Years War when English archers, believing that the French cut off the fingers of any bowmen they captured, would waggle two digits at their enemies to show that they were ready and able to shoot. It's a great story but, unfortunately, there's not a scrap of evidence to support it. Having said that, there's no denying that English soldiers were well-known for their bad language, and the French dubbed them 'Goddams' after the oath they kept hearing them utter.

## THE BATTLE OF AGINCOURT

**CRUSHING DEFEAT**  
Many French troops were suffocated as those behind trampled them into the mud to get at the English



ascertain his high status and ransom value from his appearance.

The slaughter was halted when it was clear that the French third division would not join the fight. Many hundreds had been killed, perhaps more, but as many as 1,500 prisoners survived to be taken to Calais. Many were ransomed there, others were sent to England. Among these was the Duke of Orléans, the Armagnac leader who had been pulled from a pile of bodies. He was well treated in England but, as he was the head of the Armagnacs and in the line of succession to the French throne, the English refused to ransom him. He spent the next 24 years in England, consoling himself by writing poetry.

## VICTORY MARCH

All that remained was to count the dead and ransack the French camp. English losses had been relatively light. It is not known how many ordinary soldiers died, but the Duke of York and the young Earl of Suffolk were the only casualties "of name" as Shakespeare put it. French losses were disastrous. As many as 6,000 may have died, including three dukes and eight counts, while many nobles had been taken prisoner. Henry V could resume his journey to Calais now the desperate march had turned into a triumphant procession. ☉

**3,069**

The number of French knights said to have been among the casualties at Agincourt

# WHY WAS AGINCOURT IMPORTANT?

## Henry's triumph commanded great respect

In military terms, Agincourt achieved very little. No territories were gained and, despite victory, Henry was no nearer to the crown of France. But politically and psychologically it was another matter.

Had Henry gone home after Harfleur, his campaign would probably have been something of an expensive anti-climax. But Agincourt changed everything. By defeating the might of France in battle, Henry earned enormous prestige for himself and for the Lancastrian dynasty. An increasingly united England saw the victory as evidence of God's approval of the relatively new Lancastrian regime, while foreign courts now saw Henry as a force to be reckoned with. Sigismund, the Holy Roman Emperor, signed a treaty with England, in which he acknowledged Henry's claim to the throne of France.



**LAST TO FALL**  
When the Siege of Rouen ended, it marked Henry's Norman conquest

Agincourt also made the country more willing, for the time being at least, to pay for further campaigns against the French. This became particularly important when, after he tried and failed to build on his victory through diplomacy, Henry decided conquest was the answer. In 1417, Henry was able to mount a full-scale invasion of Normandy and, while he will always be remembered for his victory at Agincourt, it was this campaign that best demonstrates his abilities as a warrior king. He made extensive use of ships to protect, transport and supply his men, not only across the Channel but up the rivers of Normandy as well. He had also built up a powerful train of siege artillery, which he used to batter the towns of Normandy into submission. When Rouen surrendered in January 1419, Henry was undisputed master of the region.

ALAMY XI, GETTY X2

# GET HOOKED

Keep your Agincourt journey going – there's much more to see, read and watch

## LOCATIONS



### ▲ AGINCOURT

There's no substitute for walking the ground where the action took place. Agincourt (Azincourt in French) is an hour's drive from Calais and there's a visitor centre on site. [www.agincourt-medieval.fr](http://www.agincourt-medieval.fr)

### ALSO VISIT

- ▶ Portchester Castle, Hampshire [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)
- ▶ The Sinews of War: Arms and Armour from the Age of Agincourt, Wallace Collection, London [www.wallacecollection.org](http://www.wallacecollection.org)

## BOOKS



### 1415 AGINCOURT: A NEW HISTORY (2015)

by Anne Curry

This updated re-release of Curry's classic account of the battle names each of the English soldiers that fought.



### THE LONGBOW (2013)

by Mike Loades

Find out all you need to know about Henry V's lethal weapon of mass destruction, with Loades' informative, illustrated guide.

### ALSO READ

- ▶ Agincourt (2008) a historical novel by Bernard Cornwell
- ▶ Conquest: the English Kingdom of France 1417-1450 (2010) by Juliet Barker
- ▶ Armour of the English Knight 1400-1450 (2015) by Tobias Capwell

## ON SCREEN

### AGINCOURT600

Check out the Agincourt600 website for information and articles about the battle, as well as places to visit and Agincourt-related events: [www.agincourt600.com](http://www.agincourt600.com)





# 1916 THE SOMME

World War I troops wait in their trenches for the advance on Beaumont Hamel, a village located just behind German lines. On this, the first morning of the Battle of the Somme, the 29th Division of the British army prepares to attack the German defences, having arrived at the Western Front just a few months earlier from the doomed Gallipoli campaign.

The first day of the Somme is legendary for its terrifying casualties. The Battle of the Somme saw some of the fiercest fighting in human history, with over one million casualties between 1 July and 18 November 1916.





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# Bannockburn: the fight for Scotland's freedom

A pivotal victory in the Scottish fight for independence from English rule, the **Battle of Bannockburn** was a classic case of wit over superior numbers and weaponry...

Robert the Bruce had carefully chosen the ground on which he would fight King Edward II's English troops. He had drawn up his forces where the Stirling road passed through the woodland of the New Park, because he knew the English cavalry would find it difficult to operate effectively in such terrain. The Scots further strengthened their position by scattering pointed caltrops and digging small pits filled with sharpened stakes in front of their lines. On the afternoon of Sunday 23 June, the English vanguard, jointly led by the Earls of Gloucester and Hereford after a dispute over who should have precedence, crossed Bannock Burn and tried to force their way through the New Park to Stirling. They charged the Scottish lines, probably after seeing Hereford's nephew Henry de Bohun slain in single combat by Robert the Bruce, but were unable to break through. Gloucester was unhorsed

and the English were forced to retreat. Meanwhile a detachment of English cavalry under Sir Robert Clifford and Henry de Beaumont attempted to reach Stirling Castle by skirting the high ground to

>

## BATTLE CONTEXT

### Date

23-24 June 1314

### Location

Two miles south of Stirling, Scotland

### Terrain

Parkland, woodland and some marshy areas bordered by streams

### Forces

**English** About 2,000 cavalry and 13,000 infantry

**Scots** About 6,000 spearmen and 500 light cavalry

### Outcome

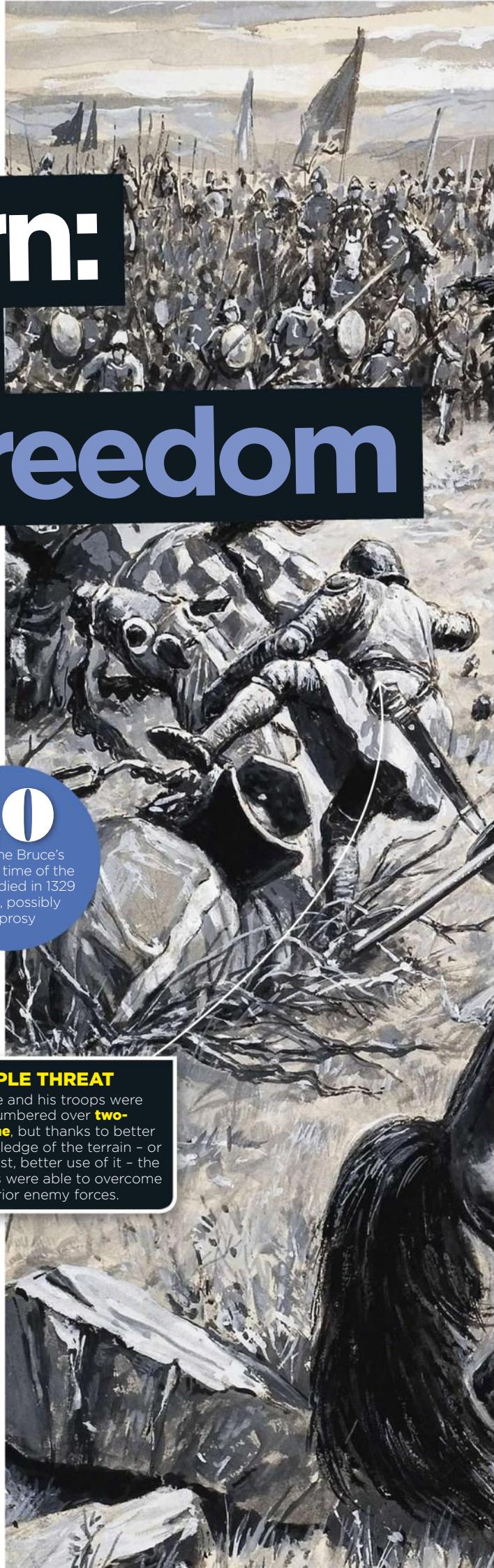
Decisive Scottish victory and the expulsion of the English from Scotland

40

Robert the Bruce's age at the time of the battle. He died in 1329 aged 54, possibly of leprosy

### TRIPLE THREAT

Bruce and his troops were outnumbered over **two-to-one**, but thanks to better knowledge of the terrain – or at least, better use of it – the Scots were able to overcome superior enemy forces.





## FOOT SOLDIERS

Shocked that infantry could defeat a cavalry-based army, after Bannockburn the English adopted the Scots' **on-foot fighting** tactics. This ushered in a **new age of warfare**, in which infantry ruled on the battlefield.

## REVENGE FOR BRUCE

Robert the Bruce leads his men to victory, fighting back against oppressive English rule



the east of the New Park, only to be intercepted by a schiltron (tightly packed formation) of spearmen under the Earl of Moray, and driven off with heavy losses. Some headed for Stirling Castle, the rest returned to the main English army, which by now had also crossed the Bannock Burn and moved onto the Carse of Stirling – marshland to the east of the New Park – where it camped for the night.

## STRIKE TWO

The following morning, the English were astonished to see three Scottish schiltrons advancing. Gloucester led the English vanguard in a charge against Edward Bruce's spearmen, only to be unhorsed again and, this time, killed.

The charge was a bloody failure, the English cavalry fell back in confusion and the Scottish spearmen, who had learned to advance without losing formation, closed in on the disorganised English line. For once, the English archers seem to have had little impact. One source suggests they were dispersed by the Scottish cavalry under Sir William Keith before they could do serious damage to the Scots, though it's just as likely they were jammed in behind the English cavalry and unable to shoot effectively.

The Scottish schiltrons continued to advance, thrusting with their deadly spears. They pushed the English cavalry back onto their own infantry, who were unable to deploy because of the woods, streams and bogs to their flanks and the mass of horsemen to their front. Eventually the English line collapsed and the defeated English ran. Abandoning his baggage, Edward II fled with his bodyguard, eventually reaching Dunbar where he took a boat for England. With the English border 90 miles away, many of his troops were not so fortunate. Some headed for Stirling Castle only to be denied access and taken prisoner, many drowned as they tried to cross the Forth, others headed south, but were killed either by pursuing Scottish soldiers or by a vengeful local populace. ◎

## HOW IT ALL BEGAN...

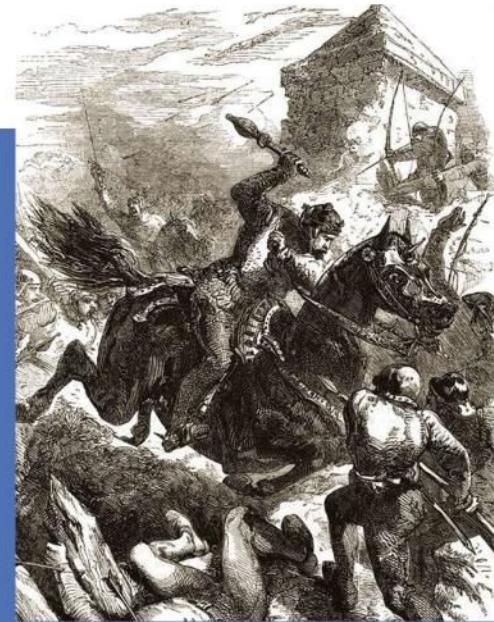
In 1290, Edward I of England saw an opportunity to extend his power northwards when he was asked to judge between 13 rival claimants for the vacant Scottish throne.

Edward chose John Balliol as the new King of Scotland, but it soon became clear that Edward regarded Balliol as little more than a

vassal. When the Scottish King tried to assert his independence by signing a treaty with France, Edward rallied a large army and, in 1296, invaded Scotland and overthrew him, ushering in a bloody period of 40 years of near-continuous warfare.

### A KING'S BETRAYAL

Edward I turns on John Balliol, sacking Berwick



## WHO FOUGHT?

Motivation, training and numbers differed greatly between the armies

Edward II had greater resources and a larger population to draw on than Bruce. He was therefore able to assemble a considerably larger force including a substantial contingent of mounted knights. These could be devastating when working closely with archers. However, Edward's army lacked cohesion, was beset by rivalries among its commanders, and many of its infantry were reluctant levies.

Bruce's army may have been smaller than the English force, but the spearmen who made up the bulk of it were well-trained and well-led. Furthermore, as they were defending their country against a foreign invader, they had a much greater motivation to fight.

**154**

The number of English earls, barons and knights killed or captured in the battle according to English chronicler, Nicholas Trevet

### ROBERT THE BRUCE



#### COIF

Coifs were chain mail hoods, worn over padded arming caps to protect the head against bladed weapons and blows.

#### SWORD

Blades such as this were high-status weapons and would only have been carried by knights and men-at-arms.

#### PLATE ARMOUR

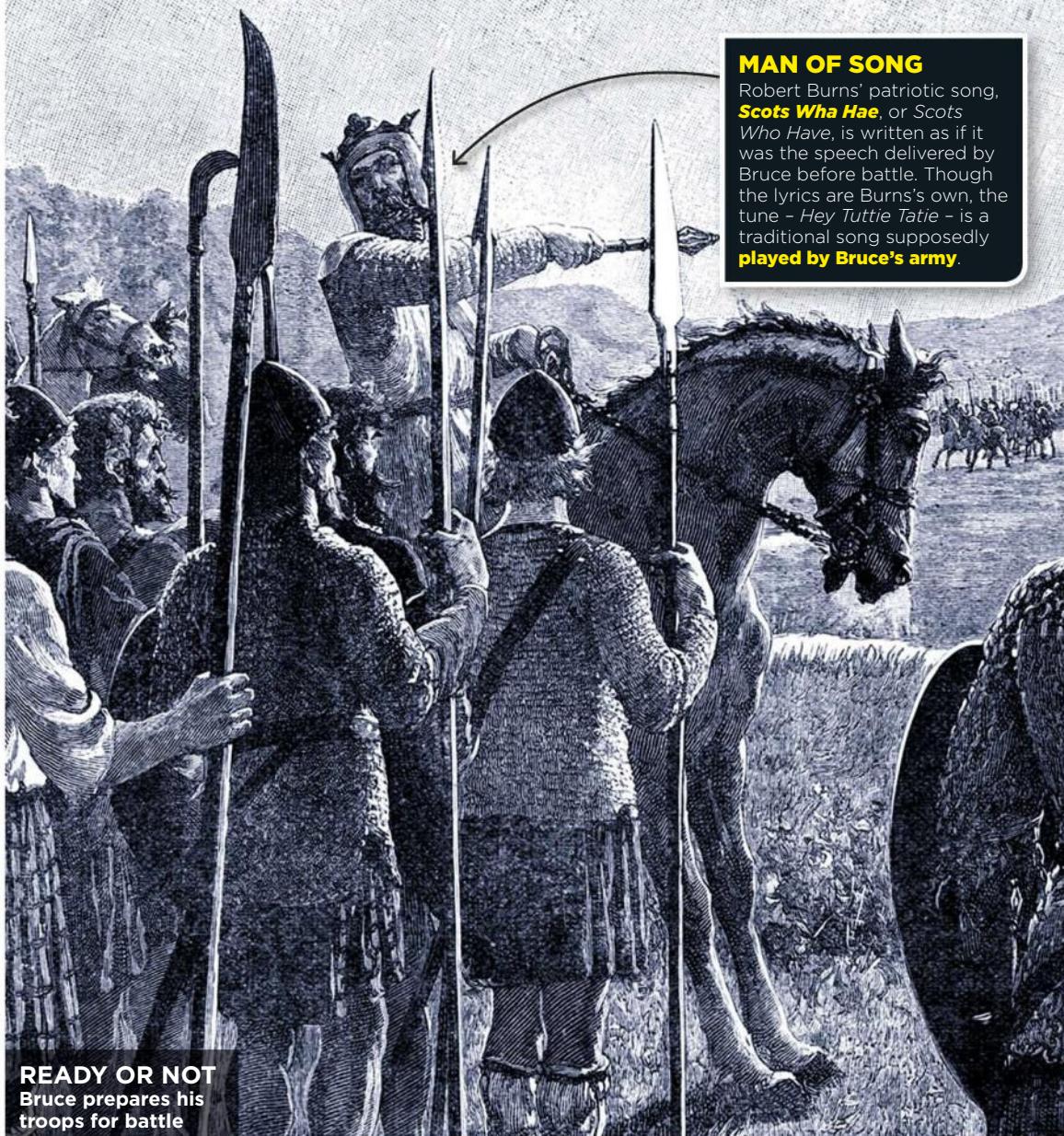
Whilst most armour still consisted of chain mail, those who could afford it began to protect their limbs with steel.

#### SURCOAT

This garment protected metal armour from direct sunlight, and was emblazoned with the heraldic arms of the wearer.

### EDWARD II





**READY OR NOT**  
Bruce prepares his  
troops for battle

### MAN OF SONG

Robert Burns' patriotic song, *Scots Wha Hae*, or *Scots Who Have*, is written as if it was the speech delivered by Bruce before battle. Though the lyrics are Burns's own, the tune – *Hey Tuttie Tatie* – is a traditional song supposedly **played by Bruce's army**.

## THE MAIN PLAYERS

### SCOTTISH

#### ROBERT THE BRUCE



A noted warrior and an able commander, he had seized the Scottish throne in 1306, after murdering his rival to the crown, John Comyn, in Greyfriars Church, Dumfries.

#### EDWARD BRUCE

Robert's younger brother, Edward commanded one of the three divisions of the Scottish army. He was killed in 1318 after invading Ireland in a bid to make himself King there.

#### THOMAS RANDOLPH EARL OF MORAY

Commander of another of the Scottish divisions. In March 1314, he captured Edinburgh Castle in a daring nighttime attack. He became Regent of Scotland after Bruce's death in 1329.

### ENGLISH

#### EDWARD II



Edward was personally brave but he was no general, and was more interested in agriculture than warfare. He was eventually overthrown in 1327 and murdered.

#### GILBERT DE CLARE

#### EARL OF GLOUCESTER



Young, rich and impetuous, he was joint commander of the English vanguard and the highest-ranking English casualty at Bannockburn.

#### HUMPHREY DE BOHUN

#### EARL OF HEREFORD



Joint commander of the English vanguard, de Bohun was captured at Bannockburn. In 1322, he was killed at the Battle of Boroughbridge, after joining Thomas of Lancaster's rebellion against Edward II.

## THE ROAD TO BANNOCKBURN

With the Scot King Robert the Bruce forced into hiding, guerrilla warfare was the order of the day until a weaker leader took the English throne

After John Balliol was overthrown from the Scottish throne in 1296, resistance to the English King, Edward I, was driven by two knights – William Wallace and Andrew Moray. In 1297, they defeated an overconfident English army at Stirling, prompting Edward to return and invade with an even larger force.

The following July, a lethal combination of archers and cavalry destroyed Wallace's army at Falkirk, and over the next six years Edward crushed nearly all Scottish resistance. In 1305, Wallace was captured and sent to London where he was brutally executed.

Edward was soon faced with a new challenge in the shape of Robert the Bruce, who had murdered his chief rival for the Scottish throne, John Comyn, in a church in 1306 and had himself crowned King. Edward immediately ordered yet another invasion and in June his advance guard defeated Bruce at Methven in Perth and Kinross.

The Scottish King went into hiding while Edward mercilessly hunted down his family and supporters, capturing his wife, daughter and sisters, among others. Over the next few years Bruce fought a guerrilla war, normally avoiding battle and destroying or capturing the

isolated English strongholds in Scotland one by one.

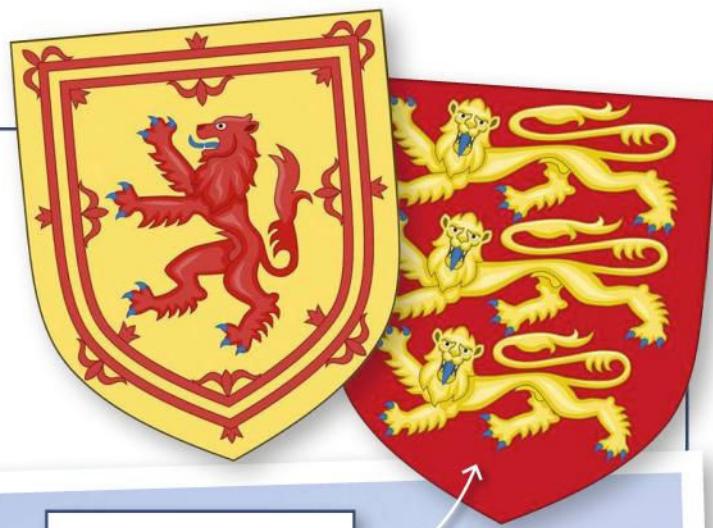
Edward II, who succeeded his father in 1307, allowed Bruce to seize the initiative and, by 1314 only two major fortresses remained in English hands: Berwick and Stirling. Besieged by the Scots, the Stirling garrison agreed to surrender if a relieving force did not arrive by 24 June 1314. To prevent this, Edward II assembled an army of about 15,000 men at Berwick and marched north to relieve Stirling. On 23 June he encountered Robert the Bruce's small but well-trained Scottish army about two miles south of Stirling Castle.



## WEAPONRY AND ARMOUR

The soldiers who fought at Bannockburn wore a variety of protective equipment and carried a multitude of weapons. At one end of the scale were the mounted knights, chiefly English, clad in mail and equipped with lances, swords,

axes and maces. At the other end were foot soldiers, often archers, who wore little or no armour. In between were infantrymen, many equipped with spears and sometimes wearing iron helmets and padded jackets for protection.



### SWORD

In combat, these were predominantly used for cutting and hacking. Some were large enough to be gripped with both hands.

### AXE

Mounted knights carried small one-handed versions, which could cleave through flesh and bone as well as cause damaging dents in helmets and plate armour.

### GREAT HELM

Worn by mounted knights and made of iron, it offered excellent all-round protection but severely limited the wearer's field of vision.



### KNIGHTS' SHIELDS

Painted with the heraldic devices of the bearers, shields offered crucial protection against blows. These show the arms of the Kings of Scotland (left) and England (right).



### SPEAR

Up to 3 metres long with a pointed iron head, spears were the standard weapons of the massed schiltrons of Scottish infantry.



### AKHETON

A quilted jacket or coat sometimes worn as padding under armour but often worn on its own to provide protection against blades and arrows.

## BRUCE VS DE BOHUN

Riding with the vanguard of the English army on the first day of the battle, Henry de Bohun, a young English knight, spotted Robert the Bruce, who was mounted on a small horse and armed with just a battle-axe. Lowering his lance, de Bohun charged at the Scottish King, who spurned flight and stood his ground. At the last minute, Bruce swerved aside to avoid de Bohun's lance and, standing up in his stirrups, brought his battle-axe crashing down on the young knight's head, splitting his helmet and killing him instantly. Bruce's lieutenants upbraided him for exposing himself to such a risk, but the King merely expressed regret for having broken the shaft of his favourite axe.

### BRAIN VS BRAWN

An Edwardian painting depicts the moment that experience bested youth on the battlefield



## BRUCE'S LEGACY

Although Scottish independence was a long time coming after Bruce's glory at Bannockburn, he was eventually recognised as King of Scotland

Bruce's victory at Bannockburn secured his grip on the Scottish throne, expelled the English from Scotland and seriously undermined Edward II's authority in England. But a bitter and lengthy struggle for independence still lay ahead.

In a bid to force Edward to accept Scotland's status as a separate nation, Bruce began sending raids into England. Over the next few years, the Scots laid waste to Tynedale, burned Hartlepool, sacked Durham and, in 1318, his army

captured the crucial border town of Berwick. English attempts to take back Berwick in 1319 were abandoned after Scottish raiders penetrated deep into England and defeated a scratch English force at Myton, in North Yorkshire.

Two years later, Edward II was nearly captured when an English army, returning from another unsuccessful invasion of Scotland, was surprised and routed at Byland near Helmsley.

In 1320, Bruce appealed to the Pope for support, notably

through the Declaration of Arbroath, a document that famously asserted Scottish independence. In 1324, he finally gained papal recognition as King of Scotland.

In 1327, Edward II was deposed by his Queen, Isabella of France, and replaced by his 14-year-old son. In the following year, Isabella and her lover Roger Mortimer officially recognised Bruce's kingship and Scotland's independence – in exchange for a payment of some £20,000.



### HERO'S HOME

Bruce's statue looks on over Stirling, outside the city's castle

### HEART OF THE MATTER

After his death, Robert the Bruce's **heart was removed** and taken on Crusade, as was his request. It was later reburied at Melrose Abbey, though the **rest of his body** remained interred at Dumferline Abbey.

### GET HOOKED!

Find out more about the conflict and those involved

### VISIT THE BATTLEFIELD

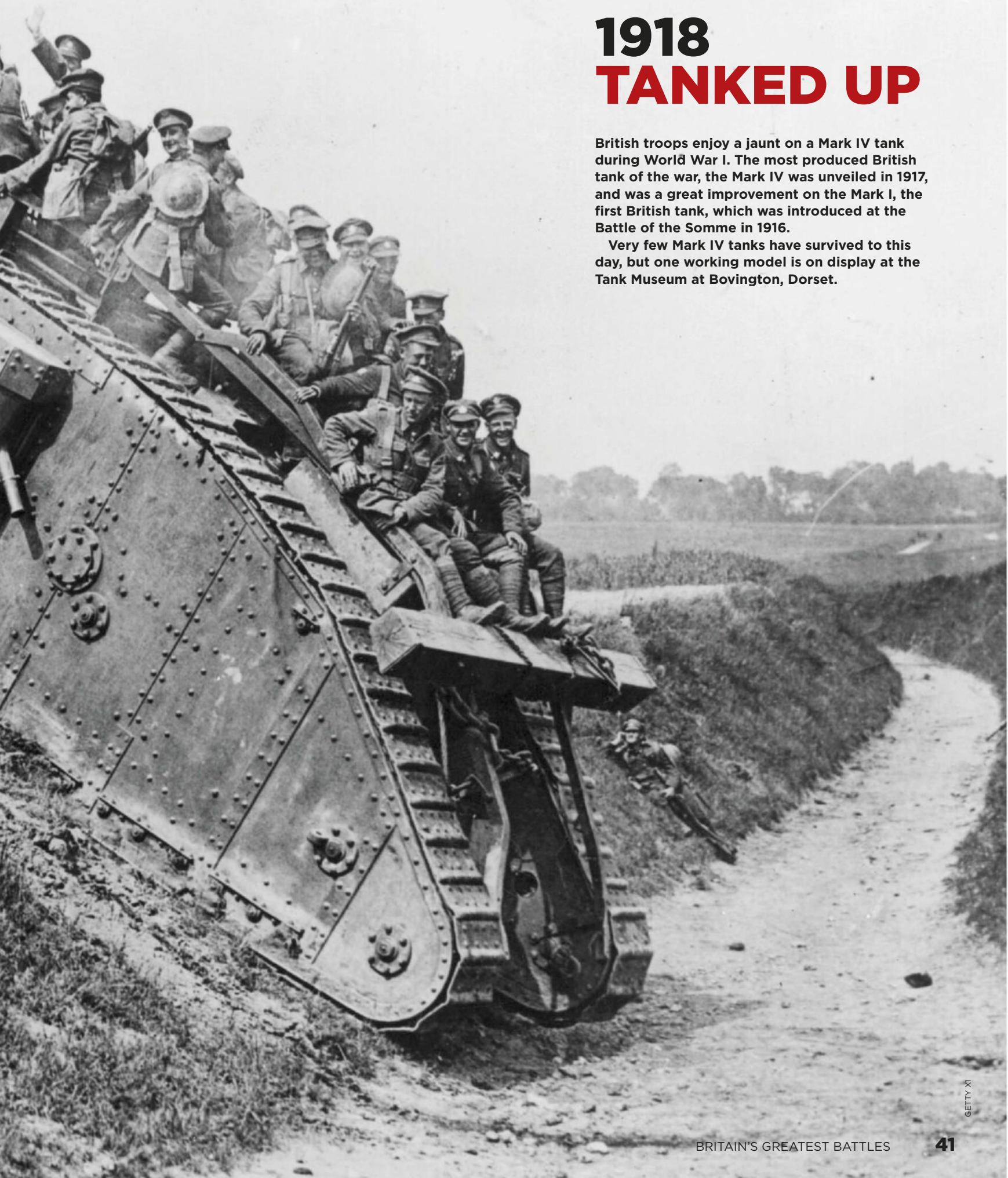
A brand new, state-of-the-art visitor centre was opened for the 700th anniversary of the battle in 2014. Interactive 3D displays culminate with the opportunity to take command of one of the armies in a computer-generated wargame. [battleofbannockburn.com](http://battleofbannockburn.com)



# 1918 TANKED UP

British troops enjoy a jaunt on a Mark IV tank during World War I. The most produced British tank of the war, the Mark IV was unveiled in 1917, and was a great improvement on the Mark I, the first British tank, which was introduced at the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

Very few Mark IV tanks have survived to this day, but one working model is on display at the Tank Museum at Bovington, Dorset.



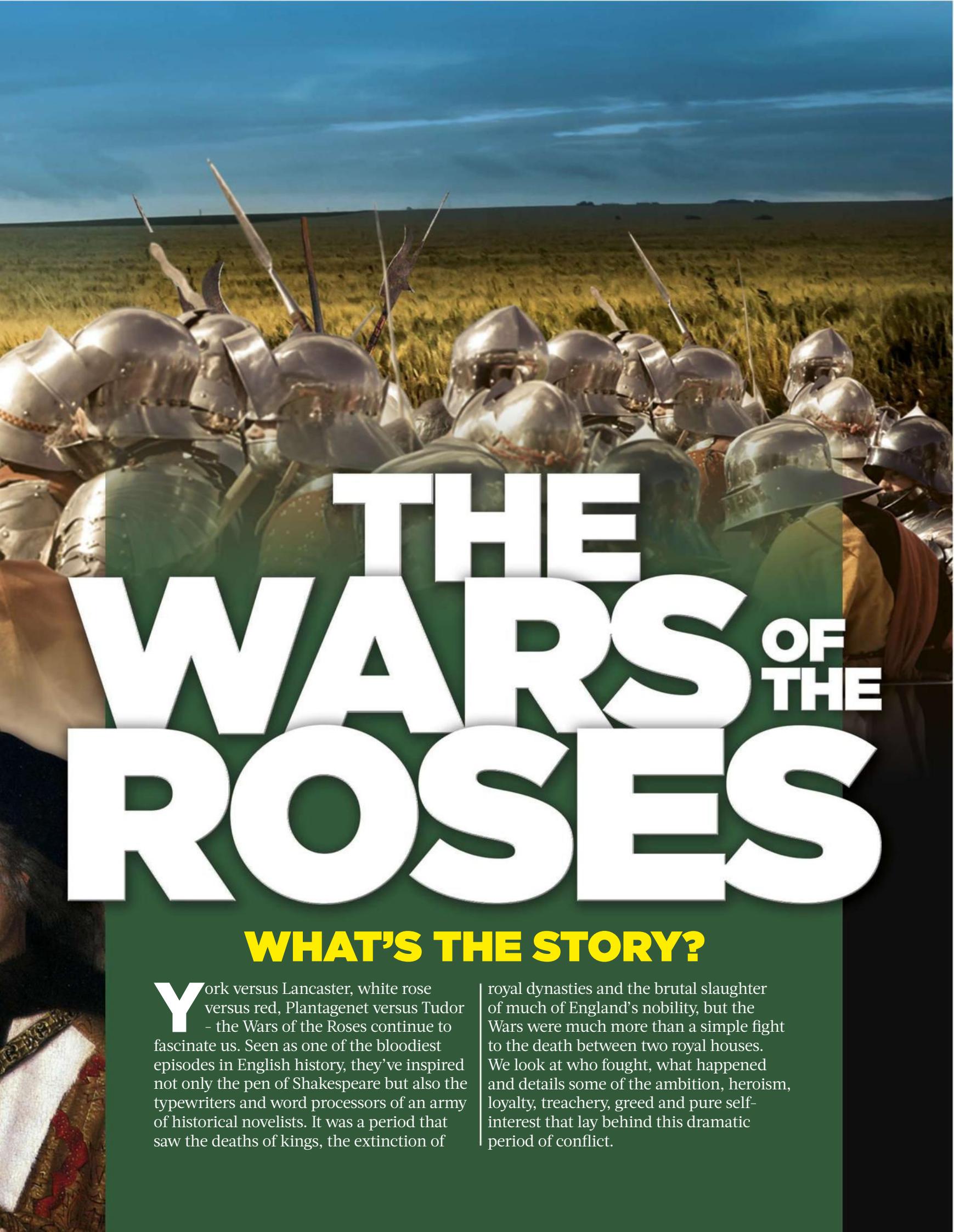


## WARS OF THE ROSES



### FAMILIES AT WAR

Knights in armour and men-at-arms fought for power in a conflict that eventually saw the last of the Plantagenet kings, Richard III (left) and the first of the Tudors, Henry VII (right)



# THE WARS OF THE ROSES

## WHAT'S THE STORY?

York versus Lancaster, white rose versus red, Plantagenet versus Tudor – the Wars of the Roses continue to fascinate us. Seen as one of the bloodiest episodes in English history, they've inspired not only the pen of Shakespeare but also the typewriters and word processors of an army of historical novelists. It was a period that saw the deaths of kings, the extinction of

royal dynasties and the brutal slaughter of much of England's nobility, but the Wars were much more than a simple fight to the death between two royal houses. We look at who fought, what happened and details some of the ambition, heroism, loyalty, treachery, greed and pure self-interest that lay behind this dramatic period of conflict.



## WARS OF THE ROSES

### RED V WHITE

Shakespeare popularised the idea that the two Houses picked their roses in the 15th century, but there's little historical basis for the event



1

# WHAT WERE THE WARS OF THE ROSES?

On close inspection, this complex era reveals itself to be a time of duplicity, rivalry and cut-throat ambition

### ROSE OF LANCASTER

The red flower now used as an emblem of Lancashire was only adopted by the Lancastrians at the very end of the Wars.

**A**lthough they're popularly seen as a dynastic struggle between the houses of York and Lancaster, the Wars of the Roses were actually three wars, largely fought between the descendants of King Edward III (reigned 1327-77), each with its own causes and ramifications.

### FIRST BLOOD

The initial conflict was caused by the inadequacies and poor mental health of the Lancastrian Henry VI of England, and the ambitions of Richard of York, great-grandson of Edward III, a leading English magnate who demanded a top role in government. This tense situation was exacerbated by rivalries among the country's aristocratic families.

In May 1455, York and the noble Neville family attacked the royal court at St Albans, killing a number of leading Lancastrian nobles. Conflict broke out again in 1459 and, the following July, York captured the King at the Battle of Northampton and then later claimed the throne for himself.

Eventually, a compromise was agreed, which allowed Henry VI to remain King, but with York installed as his heir. However, Henry's wife, Margaret of Anjou, refused to accept the disinheritance of her son, Edward, Prince of Wales, and raised an army to fight for the Lancastrian cause. York was defeated and killed at the Battle of Wakefield, West Yorkshire, in December. But the crushing victory won by York's son, Edward IV, at Towton in March 1461, effectively settled the issue in favour of the Yorkists, although occasional fighting would continue in the North East for a further three years.

### WAR REIGNITES

The second war was primarily caused by the discontent of the mighty nobleman Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick. Warwick 'the Kingmaker', as he's often known, had been a supporter of Edward IV but, following the King's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, Warwick saw his influence slip away. In 1469, he rebelled, briefly taking Edward prisoner. The following year, Warwick made an extraordinary alliance of convenience with his former foe, Margaret of Anjou, forcing Edward IV into exile and temporarily restoring Henry VI to the throne.

In 1471, the exiled Edward returned to England and brought his enemies to battle separately,



defeating and killing Warwick at Barnet, now in Greater London, and beating Margaret at Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, where her son was killed. Edward then had Henry VI quietly done away with and ruled unchallenged as Edward IV until his early death in 1483. He was succeeded by his 12-year-old son, Edward V.

## MEN OF AMBITION

The last phase of fighting was triggered by Richard III's seizure of the throne in 1483, and the disappearance of his nephews, Edward V and Richard – better known as the Princes in the Tower. These actions fatally split the old Yorkist establishment and enabled Henry Tudor – a largely unknown exile – to mount a challenge for the throne.

In 1483, many of Edward IV's former servants rebelled against Richard III. The rising was stamped out, but dissatisfaction was rife. Richard had alienated many by favouring men in his own Northern power bloc. Further grants of confiscated rebel land and property to his supporters only added to his unpopularity. As a result, although few nobles were prepared to openly support Henry

### ROSE OF YORK

Today, the white rose can be seen all over the city of York, but in the 15th century, it was the symbol of the House of York, which was based in the **South and Midlands**.

Tudor in his bid, few supported Richard, either.

On 22 August 1485, Richard was killed at the Battle of Bosworth, and Henry seized the throne.

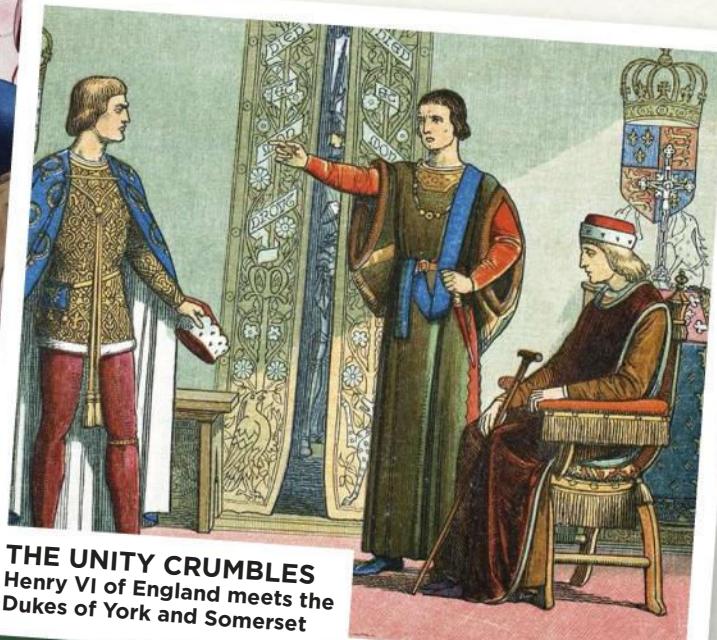
Two years later, on 16 June, Henry VII defeated a rebellion by some of Richard III's former supporters at Stoke, near Newark. After some 30 years of intermittent conflict, the final battle had at last been fought.

**"IN 1483, DISSATISFACTION WAS RIFE. RICHARD III HAD ALIENATED MANY..."**

**MIGHTY Matriarch**  
Margaret of Anjou, Queen to Henry VI, and her ladies



**THE UNITY CRUMBLES**  
Henry VI of England meets the Dukes of York and Somerset



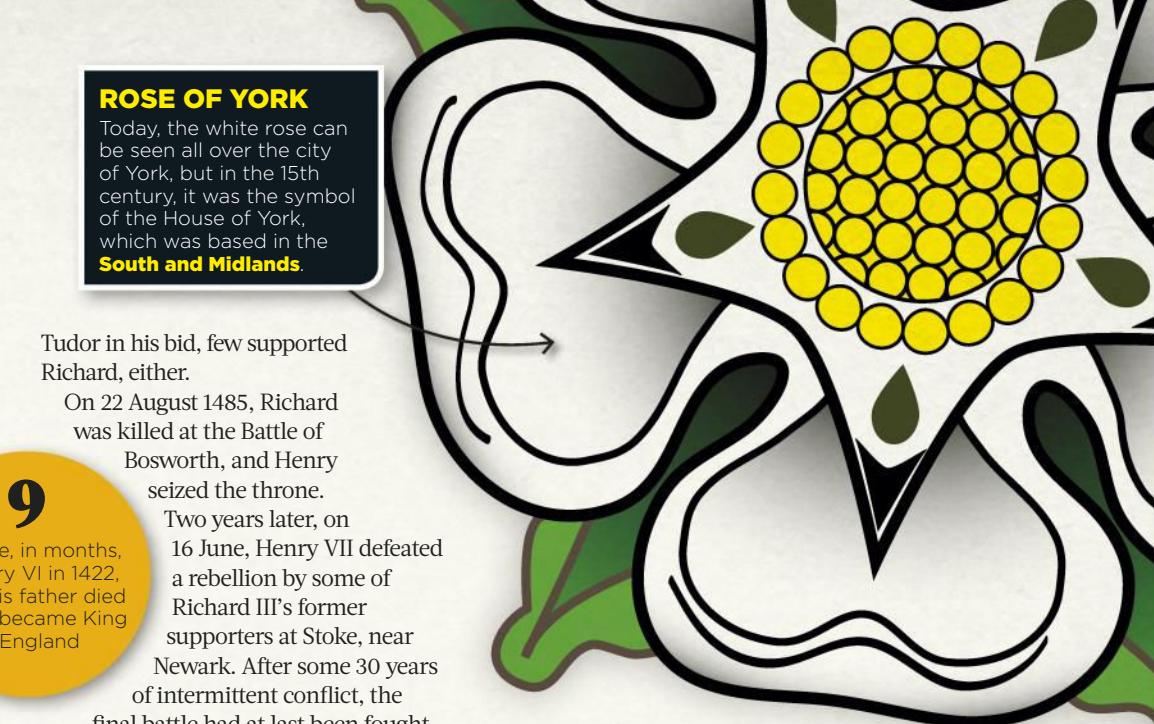
## THE GREAT DIVIDE

# WERE THEY CIVIL WARS?

While the first war had a regional flavour, with Lancastrian forces coming largely from the North and the Yorkists from the South and Midlands, these were not wars between rival regions and certainly not between the cities of York and Lancaster. A noble's title often did not equate to the area in which he held land. Indeed, it's worth noting that, for much of the period, the city of York supported the House of Lancaster.

Initially neither Richard of York nor Richard of Gloucester seem to have intended to seize the throne. York sought to secure his position as Protector of the Realm during Henry VI's insanity and defeat his rival for power (and the man he blamed for the loss of Normandy to the French), the Duke of Somerset. Eventually he realised that the enmity of the Queen meant he could never be secure while Henry VI was on the throne and he

made a bid to replace him. Similarly, in great contrast to Shakespeare's portrayal of him as a long-term schemer, Richard III seems to have been a totally loyal servant of his brother, Edward IV, while he was alive. Richard's main concern, after his sibling's death, was to wrest the new King Edward V and his brother from the control of his enemies, the Woodvilles. His decision to depose the boy came later.





# POWER STRUGGLE

*The Wars of the Roses were, perhaps, the ultimate family drama...*



HOUSE OF YORK



HOUSE OF LANCASTER



ROYAL HOUSE OF TUDOR



SWITCHED SIDES



## RICHARD III (1452-85)

Although as Duke of Gloucester he had loyally served his brother Edward IV, on the latter's death he ousted his nephew, Edward V, and assumed the throne. Unable to rally much support during his short reign, he was defeated and killed by Henry Tudor at Bosworth in 1485.

3



**T**he leaders of both factions worshipped the same God, spoke the same language and believed in the same system of government.

The participants fought for power not principles: securing their positions at court, advancing the interests of their families, protecting their inheritances and settling old scores were their primary aims.

If any principle was involved, it was whether to stay loyal to an anointed king. A few families, like the Lancastrian



### Henry VI (1421-71)

Henry was nine months old when he succeeded his father Henry V. His adult years were punctuated by periods of insanity. He was overthrown by the Yorkists in 1461, reinstated in 1470, but then murdered in the Tower of London after the Lancastrian defeat at Tewkesbury.

9  
The number of leading members of the powerful Percy family to die violent deaths in the 15th century

### WELL SCHOoled

Henry VI had a **lasting legacy** in the sphere of **education**, founding Eton College and King's College, Cambridge as well as co-founding All Souls College, Oxford.

### Margaret of Anjou

(1430-82)

The French wife of Henry VI, she ruled in his place during his insanity. A determined woman, she tried to exclude Richard of York from government and fought vigorously to secure the succession of her son, Edward, until his death at Tewkesbury in 1471.

2



### Richard, Duke of York

(1411-60)

Richard was a descendant, through both his parents, of Edward III. He was the leading opponent of royal policy in the 1450s and claimed the throne himself in 1460. He was killed at the Battle of Wakefield that December.

4

## IN THE FAMILY

It's rumoured that Isabella of Castille had an **illicit affair** with John Holland – step-brother of Richard II, from Joan of Kent's first marriage.



### Anne Neville

(1456-85)

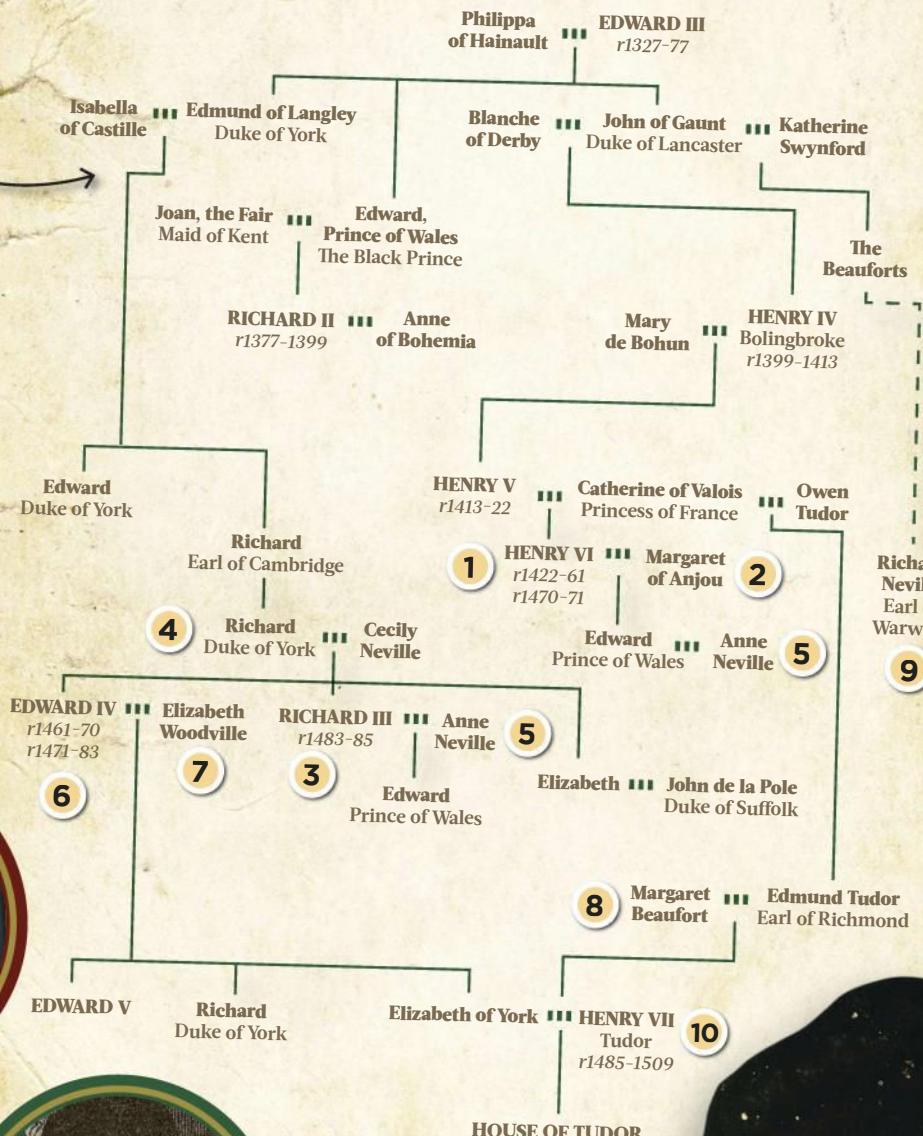
Anne married Edward, Prince of Wales, to cement an alliance between her father, Warwick 'the Kingmaker', and Edward's mother Margaret of Anjou. After her husband's death at Tewkesbury she married Richard of Gloucester (the future Richard III) and was crowned Queen alongside him in 1483.

### Edward IV (1442-83)

Tall, strong and popular with his men, Edward IV became Yorkist leader after his father Richard's death at Wakefield. His victory at Towton secured him the throne. Briefly exiled in 1470, he returned to defeat his enemies at Barnet and Tewkesbury and ruled for a further 12 years before unexpectedly dying at the early age of 41.



# The Wars of the Roses family tree



### Margaret Beaufort

(1443-1509)

A descendant of John of Gaunt, Margaret was married to Edmund Tudor at the age of 12. By 13 she was a widow and a mother – of the future Henry VII. She later married Sir Henry Stafford and finally Thomas Stanley, and was involved in the plot to place her son on the throne.

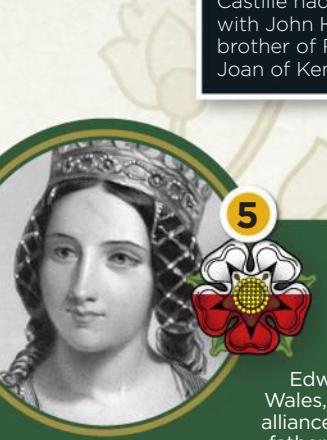


### HENRY VII (1457-1509)

Returning to Britain after years of exile, Henry Tudor won the crown at Bosworth. By marrying Elizabeth, the daughter of Edward IV, he united the houses of Lancaster and York. He died in 1509 when the throne passed to his surviving son, Henry VIII.



10



### Elizabeth Woodville

(1437-92)

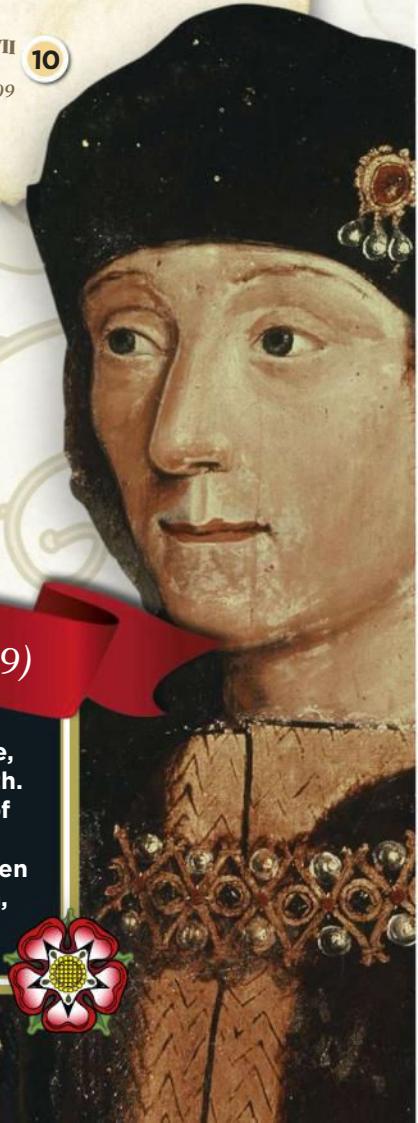
The widow of a Lancastrian knight, Elizabeth married Edward IV in 1464. He favoured her family, thus alienating Warwick 'the Kingmaker'. Her sons, Edward V and Richard Duke of York, disappeared in mysterious circumstances after her husband's death in 1483. Her daughter, Elizabeth, later married Henry VII, uniting the warring factions.



### Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick

(1428-71)

The most powerful noble in the country, Warwick 'the Kingmaker' helped Edward IV attain the crown in 1461. When he saw his influence being eclipsed by the Woodville family, he allied with his former enemy, Margaret of Anjou and restored Henry VI to the throne, only to be killed at the Battle of Barnet in 1471.



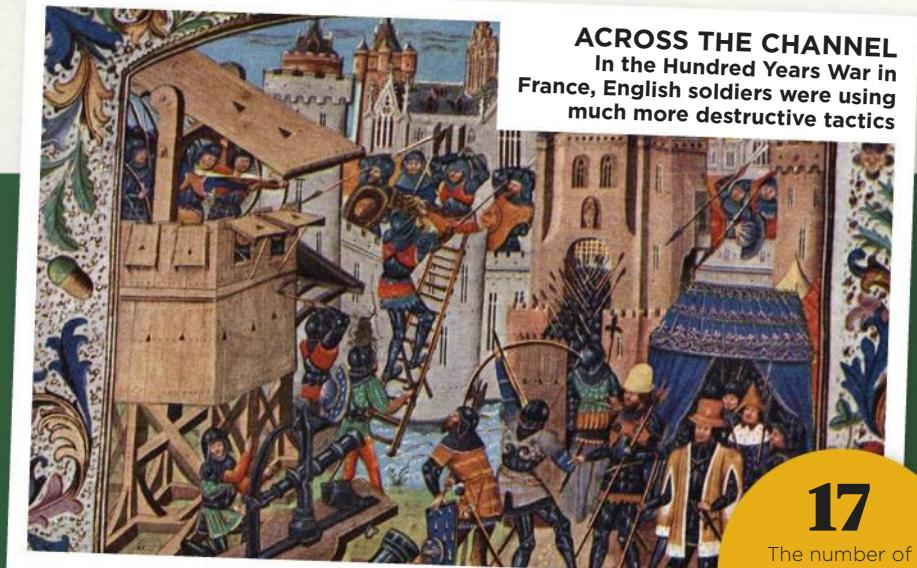


## WAR ZONE

*The main objective of the fighting was to destroy an enemy's army and kill its leaders*

**A**lthough men from all over England took part in the Wars, much of the country saw virtually no fighting. Rather than trying to conquer swathes of territory, armies would roam the nation gathering recruits, before seeking out their enemies. As a result, many key battles were fought on or near major routes like the Great North Road or outside big towns like York, Ludlow and London.

Sieges were far from common – the only sustained period of siege warfare took place in the North East, after the Battle of Towton in 1461, when fortifications like Alnwick and Bamburgh changed hands with bewildering regularity. The fighting there finally ended in 1464, when Bamburgh surrendered to the Yorkists. In doing so, it became the first English castle to be battered into submission by gunpowder artillery.



**ACROSS THE CHANNEL**  
In the Hundred Years War in France, English soldiers were using much more destructive tactics

17

The number of actual battles held during the 30 years of the Wars of the Roses

### A FAIR FIGHT WAR AND PEACE

The image of the Wars as one long unbroken period of bitter bloodshed was partly created by later historians, who exaggerated the evils of the period in order to contrast them with the peace and prosperity of their own age. In fact, campaigns were usually very short, leading one contemporary writer, Philippe de Comynes, to comment that "If any conflict breaks out in England one or other of the rivals is master within ten days or less". This may be a statement, but the fact remains that in more than 30 years of 'warfare' there were fewer than 15 months of actual campaigning in the field.

At this time, men of fighting age were often forced to join an army. Towns were occasionally sacked and looted – as troops passed through

an area, it was common practice to strip the settlement of supplies and cause a fair degree of destruction. Even so, fighting was more about the elimination of rivals than the conquest of territory; sieges were comparatively rare and England was generally spared the destructive scorched-earth tactics employed by its men in the Hundred Years War. As de Comynes wrote:

"Out of all the countries which I have personally known, England is the one where public affairs are best conducted and regulated with least violence to the people. There neither the countryside nor the people are destroyed, nor are buildings burnt or demolished. Disaster and misfortune fall only on those who make war, the soldiers and the nobles."



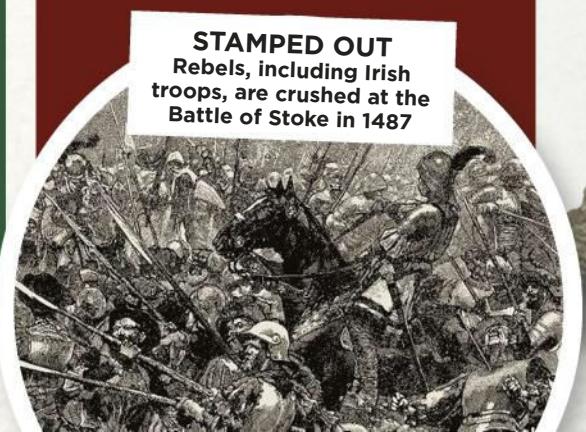
### BLOODBATH

The River Cock ran red with blood as the defeated Lancastrians struggled to escape across it at Towton.

### NOSY NEIGHBOURS FOREIGN AFFAIRS

England's neighbours frequently took the chance to intervene in its affairs. Henry VI, the Earl of Warwick and Henry Tudor all received help from France during the Wars.

France's enemies, the Burgundians, favoured the Yorkists, supporting Edward IV and later the Earl of Lincoln in a rebellion against Henry VII. The Scots turned out to help Margaret of Anjou in 1460-61 (and received the town of Berwick in exchange for their support) while the rebel army that was defeated at Stoke (1487) included a large proportion of Irish troops. England's neighbours were happy to play host, too: Calais (which was in English hands) was the Earl of Warwick's base in 1460, Edward IV took refuge in Bruges in 1470 and the young Henry Tudor spent his exile in Brittany.



**STAMPED OUT**  
Rebels, including Irish troops, are crushed at the Battle of Stoke in 1487



**MORTAL COMBAT**  
The Battle of Towton, 1461, was one of the bloodiest clashes on English soil



Bamburgh

### TOWTON

Edward IV's crushing defeat of the Lancastrians ensured the first phase of the Wars of the Roses would be won by the Yorkists.



### Ludlow

### TEWKESBURY

Round two to the Yorkists as the Lancastrian are defeated and their leadership is all but wiped out.



1464  
Battle of Hexham

1461  
Battle of Towton

1460 Battle of Wakefield

1487 Battle of East Stoke

1485 Battle of Bosworth



Fotheringhay

1460 Battle of Northampton

1469 Battle of Edgcote

1455 and 1461 Battles of St Albans

1471 Battle of Barnet

Cambridge

London

Tower of London

## ACTION PLAN BATTLE LAND

With comparatively little fighting going on, the outcome of the war revolved around just a dozen or so major battles. Towton (1461), Tewkesbury (1471) and Bosworth (1485) were all particularly decisive.

### KEY



Castles



Churches



Yorkist victory



Lancastrian victory



Tudor victory



Key settlements

### BOSWORTH

Triumph for the Tudors, as Richard III's forces are defeated by an army led by the Earl of Oxford. Richard is slain and Henry Tudor becomes King.



The English Channel



## INTO BATTLE

*The battles may have been few, but each was bitterly fought and hard won...*

### HEAVY METAL

Such suits of armour could have weighed **from 30-50kgs** – for the average man (weighing around 85kgs), that's up to **60 per cent of his body weight** again.

**N**obles may have spent much of their time plotting, scheming, and forging (or breaking) alliances but, ultimately, their power was won and lost on the battlefield. While some battles – notably Towton (1461) – turned into bloodbaths, at most, the main objective was to target a small number of enemy magnates and kill them. First the Battle of St Albans (1455),

then Northampton, Wakefield (both 1460) and, of course, Bosworth (1485) all ended this way.

Treachery on the battlefield was a terrifying threat during the Wars. At Ludford Bridge (1459), Northampton and Bosworth, leaders changed sides at the last minute with disastrous consequences for their former allies. The Lancastrian armies disintegrated among bitter

accusations of treachery at Barnet and Tewkesbury (both 1471), while Henry VII was clearly concerned that he might be undone by treachery at Stoke in 1487.

### SUIT UP COMBAT ESSENTIALS

Most soldiers brought their own weapons with them on campaign, although archers were supplied with arrows. The average foot soldier used some form of polearm for hand-to-hand combat. This might have been a bill or poleaxe, a glaive (a large knife on a pole), or even a simple spear. The mounted troops might use swords, axes, maces or war-hammers.

While the knight-in-shining-armour image is popular, such protective get-up was extremely expensive and only the very wealthy could afford it. Most merely donned whatever they could lay their hands on – perhaps just a helmet, a padded jack and an odd bit of armour looted from a previous battle.

Gunpowder was, by now, making an appearance on the battlefield. But the relatively high cost and slow rate of fire offered by both cannon and hand guns meant that the longbow remained the dominant missile weapon during the Wars.

### HARNESS

This full suit of armour was surprisingly easy to move about in, but stiflingly hot to wear. A well-made suit of good-quality steel could keep out an arrow, even at close range, but was eye-wateringly pricey.

### BOLLOCK DAGGER

This blade's name comes from the distinctive shape of its handguard. A close-quarter weapon, it could be thrust into the eye slit of a helmet or gaps in armour, or used to finish off a wounded enemy.

### JACK

These quilted doublets consisted of layers of fabric stuffed with material. They provided good protection against blades and arrows but became extremely heavy when wet.

### BILL

A cheap but handy infantry weapon. Mounted on a pole, its curved cutting blade was fitted with spikes and was used to stab and slice at flesh or tear and hammer at armour.

## MEN OF ACTION ARMIES

Nobles and knights with their retinues of well-trained and well-equipped men-at-arms formed the backbone of most armies at this time. Both sides bolstered their forces through local levies, notably using Commissions of Array – an ancient way of drafting men for service in times of national emergency. Since the late-13th century, every able-bodied man had to have his own polearm or bow and be ready for duty at a day's notice.

Meanwhile, a variety of foreign mercenaries also plied their trade during the Wars. These included Swiss, French, Flemish and German pikemen and specialist troops such as artillerymen and handgunners. A contingent of Burgundian handgunners fought for the Earl of Warwick in 1461 and, ten years later, 500 Flemish handgunners fought for Edward IV. Henry Tudor's victory at Bosworth was, in part, thanks to the French mercenary pikemen in his ranks. And, two years later, a large contingent of fearsome German mercenaries fought vigorously but unsuccessfully against Henry's army at Stoke.

### SALLET

This helmet design was common during the Wars. It protected the head and the back of the neck. For additional protection, a soldiers' mouth and throat might be covered by an extra piece of armour called a bevor.



**FIRE!**  
A re-enactor fires his handgun, as at Tewkesbury,

**“TREACHERY WAS A TERRIFYING THREAT DURING THE WARS”**



**SHARP SHOOTERS**  
Archers ready their bows at a re-enactment in Hoghton, Lancashire



### LONGBOW

Often made of yew with a hemp bowstring, these weapons could be devastating against poorly armoured troops. A skilled archer could shoot ten arrows a minute, with a range of up to 230 metres.

## ART OF WAR TACTICS

With little means of commanding an army once battle broke out, tactics had to be uncomplicated. Armies were usually divided into three divisions. Their names reflected their positions on the line of march: vanguard, mainward and rearguard. When they reached the battlefield they would, if time and space allowed, deploy alongside each other: vanguard on the right, rearguard on the left and the mainward – usually with the overall commander – taking the central spot. From this position, the battle plan was most often very simple: defeat the enemy in front of you, then wheel to envelop the rest of the opposing army.

Although horsemen were sometimes used to prevent soldiers deserting or to pursue defeated foes, most fighting was done on foot. Battles often began with an exchange of arrow fire from archers in the front ranks. They would then move aside to allow the men-at-arms, led by heavily armoured knights, to close with the enemy for vicious hand-to-hand combat.

**LETHAL WEAPONS**  
Yorkist billmen take to the field at a re-enactment of the Battle of Tewkesbury



**FIRING LINE**  
Handguns were becoming more common in the 15th century. A fragment of one has been found on the battlefield of Towton.

## TO THE DEATH KILL OR BE KILLED

Hand-to-hand combat was violent, bloody and often unbearably hot, especially for those in armour. Even the fittest man would eventually need a break, although whether he could find a way out of the press of bodies to take one was a different matter. What's more, even then he might not be safe. During the Towton campaign, Lords Clifford and Dacre were both hit by arrows after removing their helmets to gain a temporary respite from the stifling heat.

Much of the slaughter took place once a beaten army was on the run. In 1996, grim evidence was uncovered at the Towton battle site in North Yorkshire, when a mass grave of over 40 skeletons – most likely Lancastrians who were cut down as they fled or killed upon capture – was found. All but one of the skulls had evidence of head wounds, suggesting they had either discarded their helmets or had them removed. Many had been struck several times. A square hole found in the skull of one victim was almost certainly caused by the spike on a poleaxe or war-hammer.

**WAKING THE DEAD**  
Battle victims found at Towton hint at the bloodshed





## WARS OF THE ROSES



5

## FINAL SHOWDOWN

*In the last phase of the Wars, competition shifted from York v Lancaster, to Tudor v royals*

**E**dward IV's death, on 9 April 1483, took everyone by surprise. His brother Richard of Gloucester was in the North, while his heir, the 12-year-old Edward, Prince of Wales, was at Ludlow, Shropshire, in the care of his mother's family, the Woodvilles - a house among Richard's enemies. As the Woodvilles travelled to the capital, they were intercepted by Richard, who took charge of his nephew and arrested members of the Woodville faction. Richard of Gloucester assumed Protectorship of the Realm.

Over the following month, preparations were made for the young King's coronation but, on 13 June, Edward IV's old friend William Hastings, who had supported Richard against the Woodvilles, was seized and summarily executed in the Tower. Richard claimed that Hastings had been plotting with the Woodvilles against him, but it may be that Richard had already decided to make himself king and realised that Hastings would never accept the deposition of Edward V. On 16 June, the Archbishop of Canterbury

persuaded Elizabeth Woodville to hand over her other son Richard, Duke of York, so he could attend his brother's coronation. The two boys were then housed in the Royal Apartments in the Tower of London. The coronation never took place. On 22 June, it was declared that, because Edward IV had been pre-contracted to marry another woman before he wed Elizabeth

Woodville, his marriage to her was invalid and the boys were illegitimate.

On 26 June, Richard assumed the throne and, ten days later, he and his wife were crowned in a lavish ceremony. But Richard's support was limited. Many of Edward's supporters, especially in the South, were alienated by Richard's seizure.

The first major rebellion against his rule, held in late 1483 and named after one of Richard's former supporters, the Duke of Buckingham, featured a number of members of Edward IV's household. The Yorkists became fatally fractured. This enabled the exiled Henry Tudor, whose claim to the throne was shaky to say the least, to present himself as a viable alternative as monarch, promising to unite the warring houses of Lancaster and York by marrying Edward IV's daughter, Elizabeth.

**5,000**

The number of troops that Henry Tudor had at Bosworth. Richard III had 10,000 men

**POWER COUPLE**  
Richard III and his wife Anne Neville, immortalised in stained glass

**PRINCES IN THE TOWER**  
Edward V and Richard, Duke of York, who disappeared after their uncle assumed power



### FAMILY AFFAIR

Anne and Richard's marriage was **incestuous** by 15th-century standards, as his brother and her sister were married. This made them siblings-in-law which, though the eyes of the time, **made them brother and sister**.

### TALE OF TWO SIDES **RICHARD III**

**A villain to Shakespeare, a hero to others, King Richard III remains one of England's most controversial monarchs...**

#### GOOD KING RICHARD

Richard's motto was *Loyaltie me lie* ('loyalty binds me') and, until the death of his brother Edward IV, he had indeed been the model of a loyal younger sibling. He had fought alongside Edward at the Battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury (both 1471), had been an effective deputy in the North and steered clear of the irresponsible plotting that led to the downfall of his other brother George, Duke of Clarence.

When he became King, Richard remained loyal - too loyal, arguably - to his Northern friends and supporters. He also made a promising start as a lawmaker with reforms to the legal system, including an extension of the bail system. His laws were the first to be published in English. And there's no denying his bravery: even hostile Tudor chroniclers commented on his heroic death at Bosworth (1485).



**BISHOP TAKES PAWN**  
The young Richard, Duke of York, leaves his mother, Elizabeth Woodville, at the Archbishop of Canterbury's request



## DYNASTY BUILDER

# HENRY TUDOR



**KITH AND KIN**  
TOP: Catherine of Valois – Henry's grandmother  
ABOVE: Henry's uncle, Jasper Tudor

Henry Tudor was born at Pembroke Castle in January 1457. His mother Margaret Beaufort was a widow, and just 13 years of age at the time.

He grew up during the Wars of the Roses and lived for many years in the household of the Yorkist William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke until his host was killed at the Battle of Edgcote in 1469. When Warwick 'the Kingmaker' restored Henry VI in 1470, Henry's uncle Jasper Tudor returned from exile and brought Henry to court. However, when Edward regained the throne in 1471, Henry was forced abroad once more, this time to Brittany. For some 14 years, he was a mere political pawn but, by the 1480s, almost every other Lancastrian male in line to the throne had been slaughtered, leaving him as something of the last man standing: "the only impe now left of King Henry the VI's blood," as one chronicler put it. Even so, he only became a serious contender after Richard III seized the throne, dividing the Yorkist establishment, and the Princes in the Tower disappeared.

Henry's claim to the throne in 1485 was still pretty tenuous, though he did have some royal blood on both sides of his family.

He was the grandson of Henry V's French Queen, Catherine of Valois, but through her illicit second marriage to Owen Tudor. The link on the other side was much flimsier. His mother was the eldest child of the eldest son of Edward III's son, John of Gaunt, and his mistress Katherine Swynford. The pair later married but their children were barred from succession. In fact, it has been estimated that nearly 30 people had a better claim to the throne than Henry Tudor in 1485.

## "RICHARD TOOK CHARGE OF HIS NEPHEW, AND PROTECTORSHIP OF THE REALM"

### THE VILLAINOUS PART

It is not known exactly why Richard seized the throne in 1483, although Shakespeare's depiction of a man harbouring a long-held ambition to be King can almost certainly be discounted. It may be that he did so to protect himself from his enemies, notably the Woodvilles. Whatever his motives, his methods would have certainly filled his brother, Edward, with horror. Within months of the King's death, Richard had attacked Edward's widow's family, killed his best friend William Hastings, and had his sons declared bastards before locking them in the Tower of London. The Princes in the Tower were never seen again after Richard III took the throne. Contemporaries came to believe they were dead and, for many, the finger of suspicion pointed squarely at Richard.



**METHOD ACTING**  
Olivier was **shot in the leg** by an arrow during filming, so for much of the performance, his historically-inaccurate limp is real.



**THE WINTER OF OUR DISCONTENT**  
Laurence Olivier plays Shakespeare's nefarious villain in *Richard III* (1955)



## SNAPSHOTS



# 1940 BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Pilots of the 32nd Squadron relax on the grass at RAF Fighter Squadron HQ at Hawkinge, Kent, in July 1940. For nearly four months, fierce battle raged in the skies over England and the English Channel, as Germany sought to force the UK to negotiate peace.

Casualties were high among the airmen and ground crews, but with civilian casualties numbering tens of thousands, Hitler had hoped to crush Britain's spirit. However, the British resolved to never surrender, and their eventual victory at the Battle of Britain would prove vital in the war.





## THE CIVIL WAR



### THE NEW BOSS

Many opposed the rule of Charles I (left), but was Oliver Cromwell (right) to be any better?

# THE CIVIL WAR THAT RIPPED BRITAIN APART

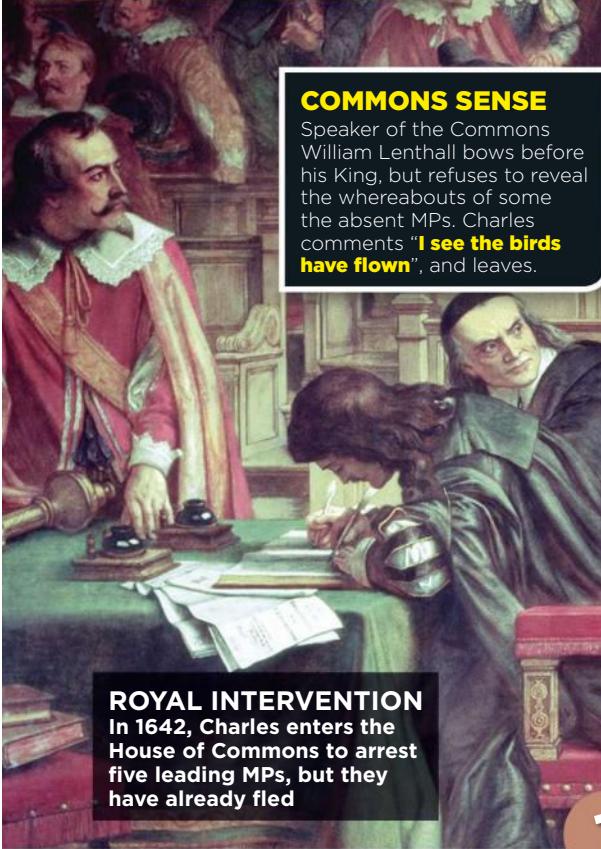
For many of us, the English Civil War is a clash between Oliver Cromwell and King Charles I, a fight between dandy Cavaliers and brutish Roundheads. But the reality is far more complex. Indeed, in recent decades, historians have sought to

dismiss the notion that this series of conflicts across the British Isles should even be called the English Civil War.

Suffice to say, when some of the instigators first took up arms in the early 1640s, few could have had any idea that they were plunging

the British Isles into a decade of turmoil. They had begun a conflict that would lead to the execution of the King, along with the total abolition of the monarchy, and would cause a greater percentage of deaths among the population than even World War I.



**COMMONS SENSE**

Speaker of the Commons William Lenthall bows before his King, but refuses to reveal the whereabouts of some the absent MPs. Charles comments "I see the birds have flown", and leaves.

**ROYAL INTERVENTION**  
In 1642, Charles enters the House of Commons to arrest five leading MPs, but they have already fled

1



## THE START OF WAR

*Why, in the middle of the 17th century, was Britain plunged into civil war?*

**O**n 23 October 1642, at Edgehill in Warwickshire, the armies of King and Parliament came to blows. The road that led them to battle was long, with numerous complex causes. Some claim religious divide was to blame, while others put it down to politics, or regional tensions. Many people believed that it would take just one battle to resolve matters and that, one way or another, the fighting would all be over by Christmas. They were wrong.

When Long Parliament, as it later became known – because it sat for such a long time – assembled at Westminster in November 1640, the members of both houses were almost unanimous in their desire to address what they saw as the abuses of King Charles I's rule.

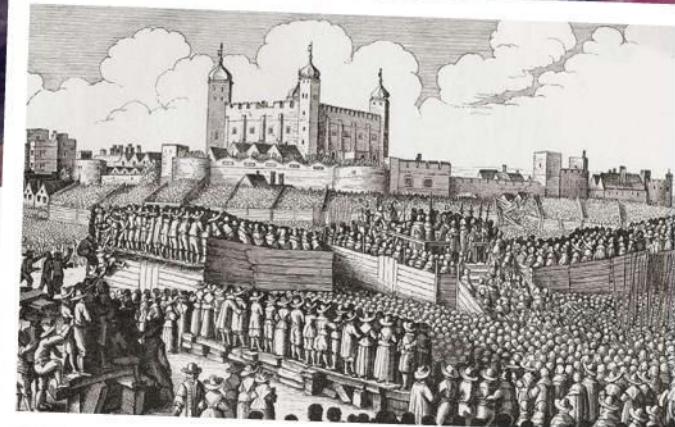
Charles had become King in 1625. Believing in his divine right to rule, he felt that Parliament's job was to vote him money, not discuss his policies. He soon ran into difficulties with his early Parliaments, who saw things differently. In 1629, he dissolved the sitting Parliament and ruled without one for 11 years. This was

perfectly legal at the time. However, without a Parliament to vote taxes, Charles was obliged to come up with a variety of ways to raise money. He used outdated laws to fine people, sold monopolies and extended Ship Money, a tax paid by coastal counties, to the whole country. Charles also caused anger over his religious innovations. He supported Archbishop

Laud's emphasis on ceremony in the Church of England, which smacked of a return to Catholicism, much like Bloody Mary in the previous century. Charles managed quite well until his ill-advised attempt to introduce the Anglican forms of worship, particularly the new English prayer book, into staunchly Protestant Scotland. This led to battle and defeat, and Charles was forced to call a Parliament, to vote the money to pay off the Scots.

**POWER TO PARLIAMENT**

Led by John Pym, the MP for Tavistock, this new Parliament secured the execution of Strafford, Charles's hated chief minister, and passed an act to ensure that Parliament met every three years and couldn't be dissolved without its own consent. It also abolished a number of royal

**A GRIM SHOW**

Huge crowds gather to watch the execution of the King's minister, the Earl of Strafford, on Tower Hill in London

courts that Charles had used to impose his will, and declared non-parliamentary taxation, like Ship Money, illegal. Up to this point, Parliament had been united, but then Pym and his circle introduced a bill of controversial reforms to the Church of England. To compound this, he then introduced 'the Grand Remonstrance', a bill detailing Charles I's so-called abuses since 1625.

This was too much for some MPs, who began to think that Pym was a greater threat than the King. Charles was gaining support, yet there was still time for one more regal miscalculation. On 4 January 1642, he illegally entered the House of Commons in an unsuccessful attempt to arrest Pym, and four other MPs, for treason.

In the end, the war ultimately began over control of the army. Both King and Parliament agreed that an army had to be raised to suppress a Catholic rebellion in Ireland, but who was to raise it? It was the King's prerogative to raise an army, but many in Parliament feared that Charles might use his military might against them, too. In the end, both King and Parliament raised troops and England stumbled into war.

# LEADING THE WAY

## THE MAIN PLAYERS

### ROYALISTS

#### King Charles I (1600-1649)

Charles was the younger son of King James I and VI. He became heir to the throne when his elder brother, Henry, died in 1612 and was crowned King in 1625. He was executed in 1649.

#### Prince Rupert of the Rhine (1619-82)

Nephew of Charles I and a key Royalist commander. Popularly seen as the archetypal, dashing Cavalier but was in fact a hard-nosed, competent soldier.

#### William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury (1573-1645)

Archbishop of Canterbury from 1633. A staunch ally of Charles I, his reforms to the Church of England were controversial. He was executed in 1645.

#### Henrietta Maria (1609-69)

French wife of Charles I, whose Catholicism aroused suspicion in Protestant England. She encouraged her husband to pursue war with Parliament.

#### James Graham, Marquis of Montrose (1612-50)

A Scottish Royalist who fought a brilliant campaign against the Covenanters until his defeat at Philiphaugh in 1645. He was executed in 1650.

#### James Butler, Earl of Ormond (1610-88)

Commander against the Catholic rebels in Ireland. In 1649 he led an Irish alliance against Parliament, but was defeated and went into exile.

### PARLIAMENTARIANS

#### Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658)

Cromwell was MP for Cambridge at the start of the war, and rose through the ranks to command Parliament's army. He became Lord Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland in 1653.

#### Sir Thomas Fairfax (1612-71)

A Yorkshireman who became Captain General of the New Model Army. He opposed the execution of Charles I, and resigned his post in 1650.

#### John Pym (1584-1643)

The MP for Tavistock was the main leader of Parliamentarian opposition to Charles I, until his death in 1643.

#### Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex (1591-1646)

Devereux lead the Parliamentarian army at Edgehill in 1642. He won an important victory at Newbury in 1643 but suffered defeat at Lostwithiel in 1644.

#### David Leslie (1601-82)

A professional Scottish soldier, Leslie played a key role in several victories. He later switched sides and fought for Charles II.

#### Sir Arthur Hesilrige (1601-61)

Hesilrige fought with mixed success in the First Civil War. He became Cromwell's enemy when the latter expelled the Rump Parliament, and died in the Tower.

## THE GREAT DIVIDE FOR KING OR PARLIAMENT?

People chose sides for a variety of reasons and, in many ways, there was no such thing as a 'typical' Royalist or Parliamentarian. In fact, the majority wanted nothing to do with the war, and either tried to keep their heads down at home or actively tried to set up neutrality agreements with their friends and neighbours. But all too often, a choice became unavoidable.

A substantial number of MPs who had originally supported the Long Parliament went on to become Royalists. Indeed, over 100 joined the King at Oxford, setting up a Parliament of their own. Some Royalists felt Pym and his allies had gone too far, while others fought to preserve the 'traditional' Church of England. Others who sided

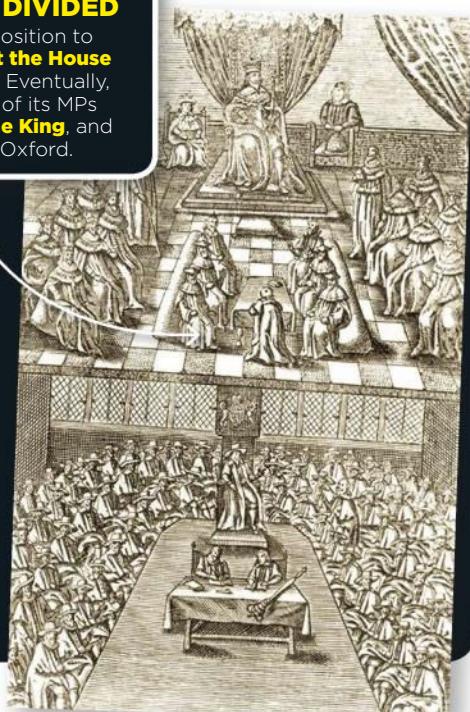
with the Royalists simply felt unable to fight against their anointed King.

On the other side, some Parliamentarians had done well during Charles's rule but fought for Presbyterianism or against Catholicism. Although many fought to defend the concessions they'd won from Charles, virtually none wanted to overthrow the King, and some may have taken a role simply to prevent more extreme people from doing so. For many ordinary people, of course, they simply did what they were told.

**LEADING MAN**  
In 1640, the English government had a clear hierarchy – the King, Lords then Commons

### A HOUSE DIVIDED

Levels of opposition to Charles I **split the House** of Commons. Eventually, about a third of its MPs **sided with the King**, and joined him in Oxford.





# THREE WARS, THREE KINGDOMS

*This series of conflicts didn't make its mark on English soil alone*

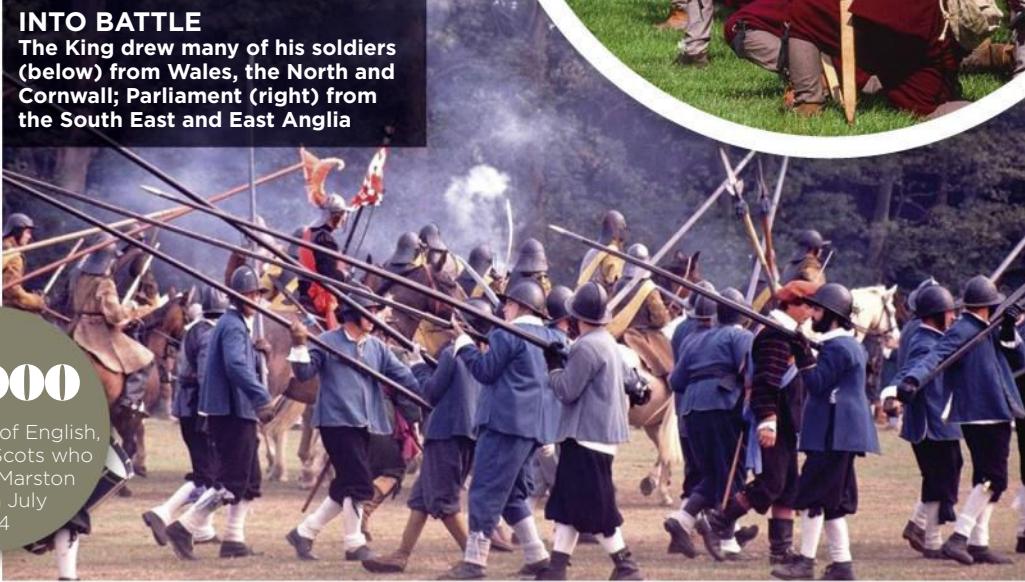
**T**he conflicts that raged across the British Isles in the mid-17th century have popularly been called the English Civil War, but in fact this is extremely misleading. They should really be seen as British conflicts, as few areas of the British Isles were not in some way affected. Many of the events that propelled the nation into civil war took place outside England. Campaigning took place in Scotland as well as England, and both countries invaded each other during the period. What's more, although fighting in Ireland rumbled on for more than a decade, it's wrong to see the conflicts as one single war – there were in fact three separate periods of fighting (see below).

In the end, though, the wars that had begun with armed opposition to the crown in Scotland and rebellion in Ireland ended with England, for the first time ever, in almost complete control of the entire British Isles.

**INTO BATTLE**  
The King drew many of his soldiers (below) from Wales, the North and Cornwall; Parliament (right) from the South East and East Anglia

**46,000**

The number of English, Welsh and Scots who fought at Marston Moor in July 1644



## RELIABLE REDCOATS

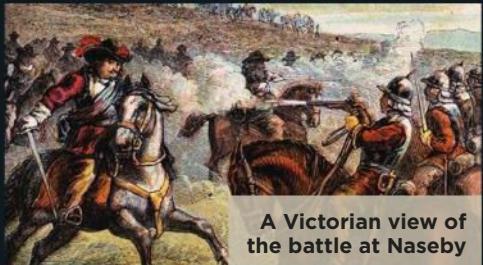
The well-drilled soldiers of Parliament's New Model Army defeated not only the King, but their enemies in Scotland and Ireland as well.



**THEY ARE BRITISH CONFLICTS,  
AS FEW AREAS OF THE BRITISH  
ISLES WERE NOT AFFECTED**

### A BLOODY DECADE

### THE CONFLICT TRILOGY



A Victorian view of the battle at Naseby

#### FIRST CIVIL WAR (1642-46)

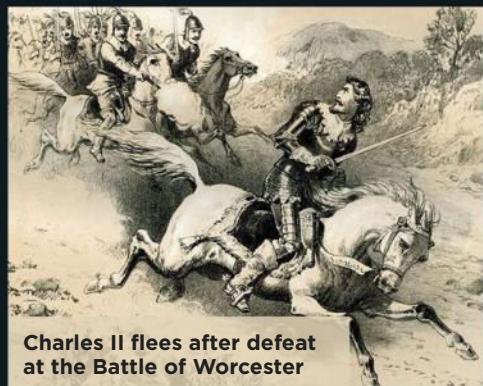
The Royalists are initially successful but, ultimately, Parliament is victorious in England and the King is arrested. The Royalists are also defeated in Scotland. No one can envisage rule without a king, so negotiations take place with the imprisoned Charles over how the country should be governed.

#### SECOND CIVIL WAR (1648)

Charles escapes, and secretly secures the support of the Scots, who invade England but are defeated. A number of Royalist risings are also suppressed in England. Attitudes harden against Charles for causing yet another war. A minority of Parliamentarians secure his execution in January 1649, and with it the abolition of the monarchy.



King Charles I gets the chop in 1649



Charles II flees after defeat at the Battle of Worcester

#### THIRD CIVIL WAR (1650-51)

Charles's son and heir, Charles II, secures Scottish support by agreeing to uphold their form of religion. Despite being defeated at Dunbar in 1650, the Scots again invade England but, in September 1651, in the last battle of the Civil Wars, they are defeated at Worcester. Charles II escapes into exile.

## NORTH OF THE BORDER SCOTLAND

Charles I made a lot of mistakes during his reign, but his bid to extend the authority of bishops and impose the English Prayer Book on his Scottish compatriots was one of his biggest. Most of the Scots were Presbyterian – meaning they believed in a church government lead by representative assemblies called presbyteries, rather than by bishops. Furthermore, the text of the Prayer Book seemed far too Catholic for their Protestant tastes. Indeed, a riot broke out when it was first publicly used in St Giles' Cathedral (the High Kirk of Edinburgh), on 23 July 1637. Legend has it that one of the congregation was so incensed that she jumped up, and threw her stool at the unfortunate Minister.

In the following year, the leading Scottish Protestant nobles, gentry and ministers all signed the 'National Covenant', a formal affirmation of their commitment to Scottish Presbyterianism and their determination to defend it. In typical fashion, Charles resolved to crush what he saw as an unacceptable challenge to his authority. Unfortunately for the King, his English troops weren't up to the job, and the Covenanters easily defeated them. Faced with the need to pay off the Scots, Charles had to call a Parliament, setting into motion a chain of events that would eventually end with his execution.

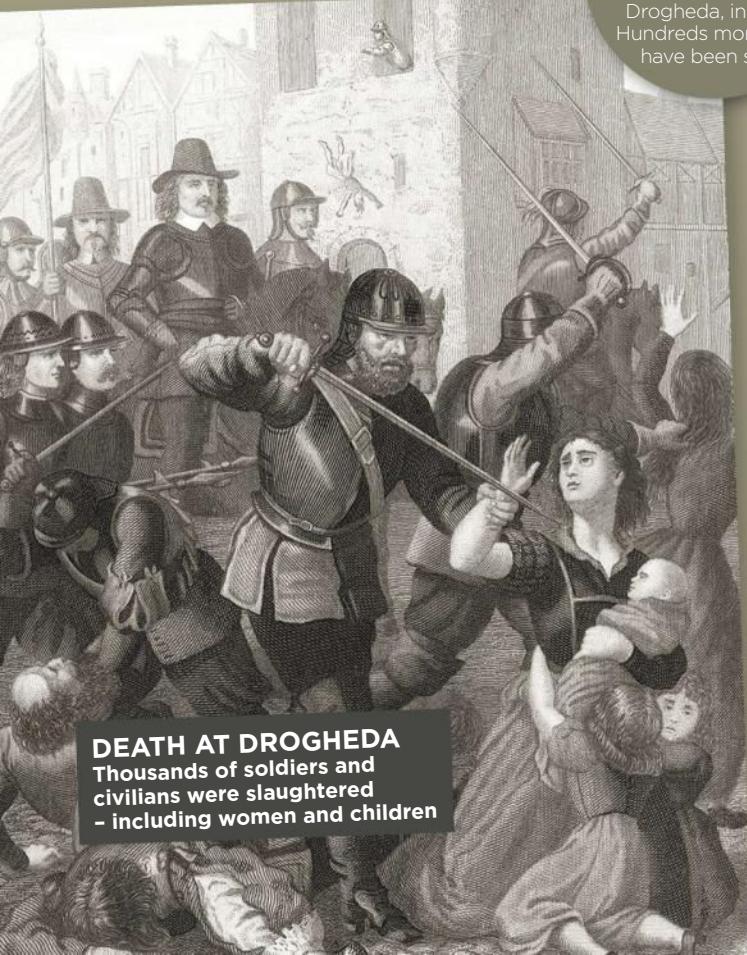
In 1644, after Parliament agreed to introduce Presbyterianism into England, a Scottish army invaded the country to fight the Royalists. This army played a crucial role in the key victory at Marston Moor, which gave Parliament control of the north of England. However, back in Scotland they weren't having things their own way. Up in the Highlands, the Marquis of Montrose led a Scottish Royalist force to a series of stunning victories over the Covenanters. However, as he moved south his men deserted and his depleted army was defeated at Philiphaugh in the Borders in September 1645.

**2,000**

The number of men killed in one night at Drogheda, in 1649. Hundreds more may have been slain



**SCOTTISH UNREST**  
MAIN: The first outing of the Anglican prayer book in Scotland was an unmitigated disaster  
LEFT: The signing of the National Covenant locked Scotland into the war



### DEATH AT DROGHEDA

Thousands of soldiers and civilians were slaughtered – including women and children

## ACROSS THE SEA IRELAND

In October 1641, rebellion broke out in Ulster. Although it was essentially a rising of the oppressed Gaelic Catholic population against their Protestant overlords, it also attracted the support of the 'Old English', the Catholic descendants of earlier English settlers in Ireland. Exaggerated stories of the massacre of Protestants were soon circulating in England and Scotland. This led Charles to send the Earl of Ormond and his army to fight the rebels, while Parliament sent a force to protect Dublin and the Scottish Covenanters sent an army to Ulster. However, there was little co-operation between the three forces, and the rising rumbled on.

In September 1643, Ormond signed a truce with the Irish rebels, which enabled him to send troops back to England to fight for Charles. Many of his men mutinied when they were asked to battle their English

compatriots – indeed, many ended up fighting for the Parliamentarians.

In 1646, Ormond allied with the Irish rebels, who saw the anti-Catholic English Parliament as a far greater threat than the King. Two years later, following Charles's alliance with the Scots, they were joined by the Scottish Covenanters. In mid-June 1649, Ormond laid siege to Dublin. However, on 2 August his army was routed at Rathmines by a Parliamentarian army. This cleared the way for up-and-coming military leader Oliver Cromwell to begin his brutal campaign and to capture Drogheda and Wexford. Terrified by the massacres that took place there, most other rebel strongholds soon surrendered.

Cromwell left Ireland in May, leaving his son-in-law Henry Ireton to complete the suppression of the rebels. Limerick fell in October 1651, Galway in May 1652 and, when the island castle of Cloughoughter surrendered to the Parliamentarians in April 1653, the rebellion was finally at an end.



# THE FIGHTERS

*The Civil Wars saw the Parliamentarian Roundheads take on the Royalist Cavaliers... or did they?*

**T**he idea of gaily dressed Cavaliers in plumed hats doing battle with helmeted Roundheads is a Victorian misconception. The reality is that both armies in the Civil Wars were largely dressed in exactly the same way, and any cavalryman – ‘Roundhead’ or ‘Cavalier’ – offered the opportunity of wearing a helmet, breastplate and thick leather coat would have jumped at the chance.

‘Roundhead’ and ‘Cavalier’ were originally terms of abuse. Some of those who rioted in support of Parliament in 1641 had short hair, and so they were nicknamed ‘Roundheads’. Equally, ‘Cavalier’ was a term of abuse for the gallants in Charles’s court, implying they were arrogant foreign horsemen. Such people were just a tiny minority of those involved in the war, but the names stuck.

Until the establishment of Parliament’s New Model Army, whose soldiers were uniformly clothed in red, infantry regiments were clothed in whatever colour uniform their

**22,000**

The number of men planned to make up Parliament's New Model Army

colonels chose for them. As a result there were regiments on both sides wearing the same colour coats – red, blue, green and white – which could lead to considerable confusion on the battlefield.

The armies tried to get round this in a variety of ways. Cavalrymen were often given coloured scarves or sashes to wear. These were normally red for the Royalists, tawny orange for the Parliamentarians. An army might adopt a ‘field sign’ to distinguish its soldiers, such as a bit of greenery stuck in the

hat, and usually had a ‘field word’ – a simple phrase to shout out as a kind of password. Obviously field words were hardly secret and field signs could be swiftly removed (Parliamentarian general, Sir Thomas Fairfax, avoided capture by doing this at the Battle of Marston Moor). At the Battle of Cheriton in 1644, both sides initially took to the field with something white in their hats as a field sign and shouting out ‘God with us’ as a field word!

## HEADGEAR

Musketeers rarely wore helmets. They normally wore knitted caps or soft hats, sometimes with something stuck in them to show which side the soldier was fighting for.

## MATCHLOCK

When a musketeer pulled the trigger, a piece of smouldering cord (called ‘match’) ignited the gunpowder charge in the musket.

## MUSKETEERS

Up to two-thirds of the infantry, in both sides’ armies, were musketeers. They were trained to deploy in lines up to six deep and to shoot together in volleys.

### BANDOLIER

Hanging off this cross-body belt are 12 wooden tubes. Each one contains enough gunpowder (made of charcoal, sulphur and saltpetre) for a single shot.

### SHOES

In the 17th century, soldiers’ shoes were ‘straights’. In other words, there was no left or right, and a shoe could be worn on either foot.

### FLINTOCK PISTOLS

These weapons are a high quality pair, and would likely only have been carried by a mounted officer.



## UNDER YOUR HAT

Many cavalrymen wore a metal skullcap called a ‘secret’ under their hats for protection.



### BOOTS

The riders wore long leather boots, which could be rolled up or down as required.

### ARMOUR

Ideally, both armies' cavalrymen would wear an iron breastplate, back plate and helmet. But in practice, many didn't receive all this armour.

### SASH OF DEFiance

Roundheads normally wore orange sashes as it was the colour of their commander, the Earl of Essex. However William Waller, another Roundhead General, disliked Essex so gave his troops blue sashes instead.

### HORSEMEN

In theory, horsemen were organised into 'troops' of 50-100 individuals.

A number of troops were then brought together to form a regiment. Keeping them supplied with suitable mounts was a constant problem.

### PIKEMAN'S ARMOUR

Consisted of a 'morion' helmet, a breastplate, and tassets to protect the thighs.

## WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

At the outbreak of war, Parliament controlled the key arsenals in the country. Many soldiers brought along weapons and armour that had been in the family for years.

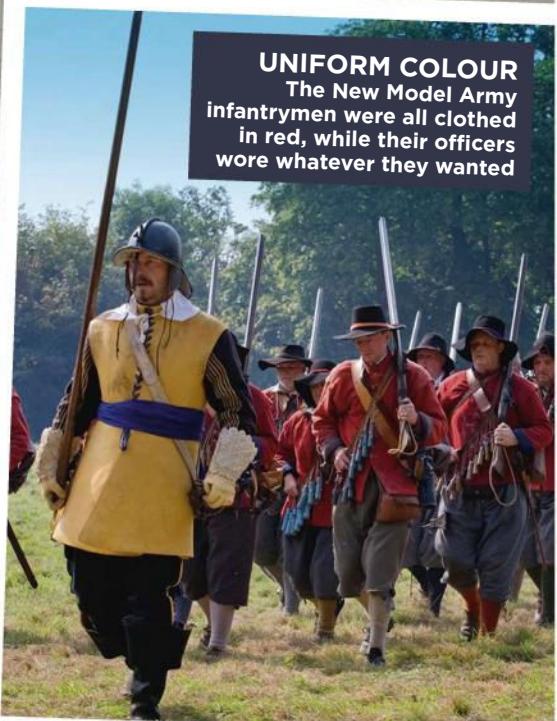


### BUFFCOAT

A toughened-leather coat, which provided some protection against blows. This particular example was worn by Thomas Sanders, a Derbyshire Roundhead.

### UNIFORM COLOUR

The New Model Army infantrymen were all clothed in red, while their officers wore whatever they wanted



## TASK FORCE THE NEW MODEL ARMY

As 1644 drew to a close, Parliamentary forces had gained the upper hand, but had still not been able to land a knockout blow against the Royalists. Having been raised to fight in specific parts of the country, Parliament's armies were very local in their outlook. Their commanders frequently failed to co-operate, and some held their positions more as a result of social standing or political influence rather than due to any military ability. To deal with these problems, Parliament established the New Model Army, a force liable for military service in any part of the the British Isles – including Ireland and Scotland.

To reduce political infighting and enable the appointment of competent officers, the House of Commons passed a bill obliging MPs and members of the House of Lords to resign their commands in the army. A few MPs were exempt from this – notably Oliver Cromwell, whose military might was highly valued by Parliament.

The new army took to the field in 1645 under the command of Sir Thomas Fairfax, a Yorkshire gentleman who had earned a good reputation as a soldier. Cromwell was its general of horse. In June, it routed the Royalists at Naseby. By mid-1646, the war in England had been won. In 1650, Cromwell took command of the Army, leading it to victory over the Scots, and it was with its support that he seized power in 1653.



## THE CIVIL WAR

# "MEN'S BOWELS AND BRAINS FLEW IN OUR FACES"

A Roundhead Sergeant describes the Battle of Newbury, 1643



### BRUTAL BOUTS

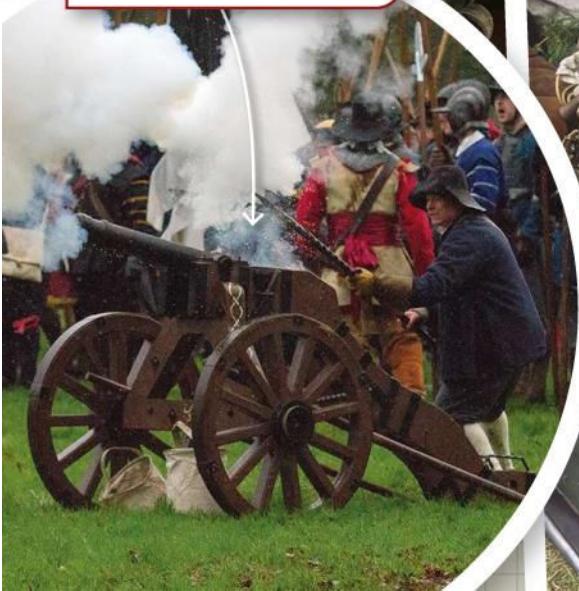
During battles, **hand-to-hand fighting** was confusing and terrifying. Such was the crush it could be difficult to **wield your weapons** effectively.

### PIKE BLOCK

With their long, metal-tipped pikes, the pikeman played a key role in protecting their musketeers from enemy cavalry.

### CANNON'S ROAR

Both sides used a variety of artillery, ranging from these light guns, to true cannons – enormous weapons that needed teams of horses or oxen to move them.



### DEADLY WEAPONS

A soldier's weapons, whether pistol, musket, carbine (short musket carried by cavalry), or swords, needed to be well looked after.



### SHOOT AND THRUST

Cavalrymen often fired their pistols first, before drawing their swords for close-quarter combat.



# BATTLEFIELD TACTICS

*A successful general needed to combine his different forces, and control his troops*

**M**ost Civil War soldiers – no matter which side they fought on – were equipped with much the same tools. If cavalry, they would have had swords, pistols and short muskets called carbines. If infantry, then muskets and long, pointed spears called pikes, were their weapons.

In a battle, it was customary for the infantrymen to form up in the central ranks, with the cavalry on either flank although, in practice, this didn't always happen. The smoothbore matchlock muskets used by the infantry were, by today's standards, incredibly slow to load and highly inaccurate, so 'pikemen' – whose job it was to protect the musketeers from enemy cavalry – were necessary. They also provided some muscle amid the action. The musketeers would join in the fighting, too, using the heavy wooden butts of their muskets as clubs.

**30,000**

The number of men, approximately, who clashed at the Battle of Edgehill

In theory, cavalry were supposed to drive off the enemy horsemen in front of them and then wheel inwards to attack the exposed flank of the enemy infantry. But this was easier said than done. It was hard to rally cavalry who had launched a charge, and a wise commander would always keep some of

his horsemen back as a reserve. At the Battle of Edgehill, for example, the Royalist cavalry defeated the Parliamentarians in front of them, and then rode off in pursuit – the battle had nearly been lost by the time they returned. At Naseby,

Cromwell had plenty of well-trained cavalry, enabling him to defeat his

Royalist opponents with sufficient reserves to attack their infantry. Conversely, the long, iron-tipped pikes of the foot soldiers could form a deadly barrier to cavalry, and as such the horsemen often needed infantry support of their own to defeat the enemy infantry.

## FLOWING LOCKS

Despite being an ardent Parliamentarian 'Roundhead', Sir Arthur Hesilrige's hair was as long as any Cavalier's.

## IN THE THICK OF IT HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT

Richard Atkins was a Royalist cavalry officer who wrote a vivid account of his desperate struggle with Sir Arthur Hesilrige at the Battle of Roundway Down, Wiltshire, in 1643. Hesilrige was a leading opponent of Charles I who had raised a regiment that was so heavily armoured that its troopers were nicknamed 'lobsters' because of their tough shells. Hesilrige's armour was even tougher...

"Twas my fortune in a direct line to charge their general of horse... he discharged his carbine first, but at a distance not to hurt us, and afterwards one of his pistols, before I came up to him, and missed with both: I then immediately struck into him, and touched him before I discharged mine and I'm sure I hit him, for he staggered and presently wheeled off from his party and ran... I heard a voice saying 'Tis Sir Arthur Haslerigge, follow him'... follow

him I did, and in six score yards I came up to him and discharged the other pistol at him and I'm sure I hit his head for I touched it before I gave fire but he was too well armed all over for a pistol bullet to do him any hurt... I ran his horse into the body and resolved to attempt nothing further than to kill his horse; all this time we were together hand to fist. Upon the faltering of his horse his headpiece opened behind, and I gave him a prick in the neck, and would have run him through the head if my horse had not stumbled at the same place."

With his dying horse able to go no further, the wounded Hesilrige was about to surrender when he was rescued by a group of Roundhead horsemen.

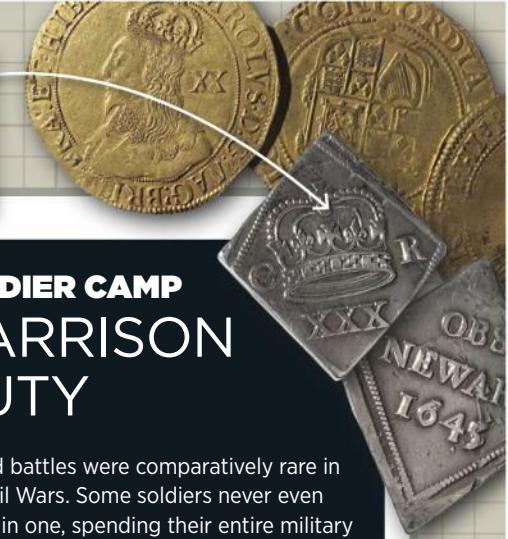
## COINING IT IN

When coins were scarce, armies improvised. These diamond shapes were made from melted down silver and used within the besieged town of Newark.

## SOLDIER CAMP GARRISON DUTY

Pitched battles were comparatively rare in the Civil Wars. Some soldiers never even fought in one, spending their entire military career on garrison duty – guarding a village, town or fortress. In theory, garrisons were supposed to gather money and supplies for the war effort but, in practice, many just looked after themselves.

The Parliamentarian garrison of Great Chalfield near Bath is a case in point. Consisting of a troop of horse and two companies of foot – as many as 400 men – their main war service seems to have involved keeping an eye on their Royalist counterparts in nearby Lacock. Some garrisons could be extremely active, but the fact is that garrison duty reduced the number of men available for combat. In June 1645, nearly half of Charles I's troops were scattered in garrisons across the country. In many ways this suited Charles, as he was spared the trouble of paying and feeding them – they got their money and food from the surrounding areas – but it's tempting to wonder what might have happened if he'd had some of these troops with him at Naseby, where his army was heavily outnumbered and defeated.



**THE DARK KNIGHT**  
Hesilrige's heavy armour saved him from almost certain death at the Battle of Roundway Down



### WHEN DID YOU LAST SEE YOUR FATHER?

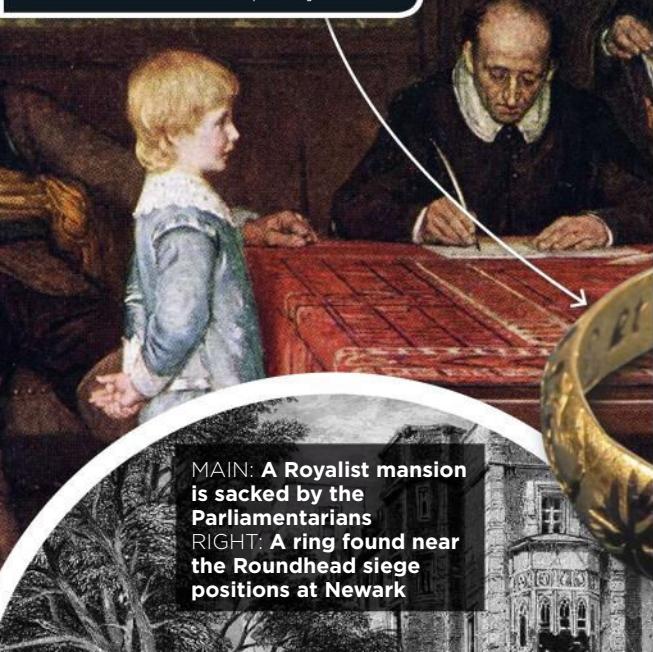
This 19th-century painting shows a young Royalist boy being questioned by Roundheads

### TRUE STORY?

This painting may have been inspired by a real event in the Civil Wars, when the Whitelocks, a Roundhead family from Fawley Court near Henley, were interviewed by the Cavaliers.

### SYMBOL OF UNITY

Many families were split apart by the Civil Wars. Some found themselves taking up arms against their brothers and friends, as they joined the different sides. With the inscription, "No calamity will separate our family" it's possible that this ring belonged to someone with such split loyalties.



MAIN: A Royalist mansion is sacked by the Parliamentarians  
RIGHT: A ring found near the Roundhead siege positions at Newark

## 5 LIVING IN A WAR ZONE

As the peace shattered, so too did everyday life. Civilians became victims...

**N**o one could escape the impact of the Civil Wars. As the country was torn apart, the conflict seeped into every corner of the country, spilling blood in hitherto peaceful places. By the wars' end, the country was far more heavily taxed than it had ever been under Charles I's rule. Taxation ranged from local assessments to a nationwide excise tax on consumer goods. After the war, many wealthy Royalists had their estates seized, and had to pay substantial fines to recover them. Ordinary people were forced to contribute in other ways as well. Crops and animals were requisitioned or simply stolen. During the Siege of Devizes, Wiltshire, in 1643, the defending Royalists ran short of match for their muskets (see page 62) so they took all the cords from the town's beds to boil up in order to make some more.

writer Richard Gough described how his small community supplied around 20 men for the Royalist cause. Of these, he reports that no fewer than 13 were killed.

Because they were often short of money, Royalist armies often relied on 'free quarter', where towns and villages were obliged to house and feed soldiers at their own expense.

As well as the monetary burden, civilians had another reason to dread a visit from an army. Soldiers were, in effect, walking infections, spreading plague and disease as they travelled across the land.

The historian Charles Carlton has calculated that, in England alone, out of a population of about 5 million at the time, at least 180,000 people died in war-related deaths. The proportion is higher even than World War I.

Sometimes, particularly in the southwest, local people fought back. Named 'clubmen' after the rudimentary weapons they carried, they banded together in a bid to keep the armies of both sides at bay. On one occasion one group unfurled an intimidating banner. It read:

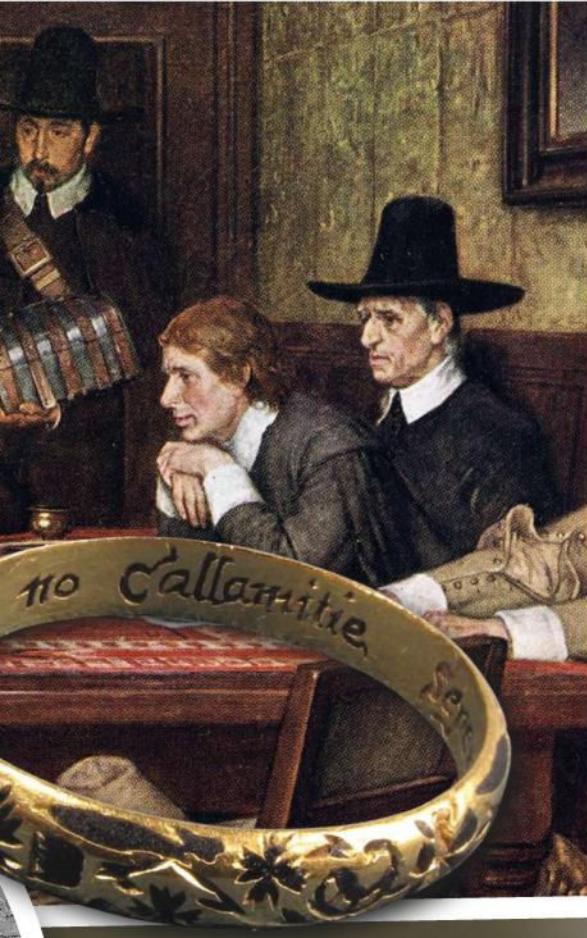
"If you offer to plunder or take our cattle  
Be assured we will bid you battle."

**180,000**

The number of people in England who died as a result of the wars



MAIN: Royalist Corfe Castle in Dorset was reduced to ruins by the Roundheads  
RIGHT: Lady Mary Bankes, the last owner and inhabitant of the Castle



## IT'S A MASSACRE WAR CRIMES

The unwritten laws of war at the time stated that if a town or castle forced attackers to storm it, the lives and property of those inside were forfeit. Many towns and castles were plundered after their capture – 140 wagons were needed to carry the loot from Leicester after it fell to the Royalists in 1645. But, aside from a handful of cases, massacres in England were relatively rare.

However, the situation elsewhere was very different. When Dundee was sacked by the English Parliamentarians in September 1651, at least 500 of its inhabitants were killed. In Ireland, a combination of political, racial and religious factors led to much greater savagery. After storming Drogheda in September 1649, Cromwell's troops massacred the entire (largely English) garrison together with a proportion of the town's



### NO MERCY

Some 100 Royalists were slain when the Roundheads stormed Basing House, Hampshire

population. A similar slaughter took place at Wexford a month later. Historians disagree over how many civilians were killed, but the fact remains that Cromwell approved of what happened, regarding the bloodshed as God's judgment on what he saw as his sinful enemies.

## CORFE CASTLE WITHSTOOD TWO MAJOR SIEGES BEFORE IT FINALLY FELL



### WARRIOR WIDOW

Dressed in black, Lady Mary Banks mourns the **death of her husband** who died while away with the King at Oxford. She holds the **keys to Corfe Castle**, which she has to defend while grieving.



## BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE STRATEGIC SLIGHTS

The capture of many Royalist strongholds in the final years of the First Civil War left the Parliamentarian victors with something of a problem. To station soldiers in all of them would have been prohibitively expensive, but to do nothing would surely have left them open to potential future Royalist risings. The solution was to 'slight' them, or render them indefensible.

The degree to which this was done varied considerably from place to place. Coastal fortifications were generally left alone as they were needed to defend the country, and some were merely symbolic. At Berkeley in Gloucestershire, for example, the token slighting saw just a small section of wall demolished. But sometimes the destruction was extensive. The ruins of Corfe Castle in Dorset is a prime example.

The castle had been a major thorn in the Parliamentarians' sides. Bravely defended by its owner, Lady Mary Banks, it had withstood two major sieges before it finally fell in February 1646, thanks to a case of treachery. A note in the House of Commons Journal for 5 March of that year states that, immediately after morning prayers, the House voted that the captured castle should be demolished. A Captain Hughes of Lulworth was appointed to oversee the destruction, which involved exploding gunpowder under the castle walls. Archaeological investigations have uncovered the trenches dug for the slighting of the outer gatehouse and a cavity, dug by the men who were trying to demolish the keep, can still be seen. Although the demolition work cost over £300 – more than £25,000 in today's money – it was only partially successful, leaving the spectacular ruins that can be seen today.



# NASEBY, 14 JUNE 1645

## **ACTION PLAN**

### **A 1647 record of the battle at Naseby**

## ROYALIST ATTACK

**ROYALIST ATTACK**  
The Royalist cavalry defeat  
their opponents, but  
then ride on to attack the  
Parliamentarian baggage park

# The turning point of the civil war

Before the **Battle of Naseby** the outcome of the First Civil War in Britain hung in the balance. After it, Parliamentarian victory was only a matter of time. We examine this pivotal moment...

**O**ne foggy morning in June 1645, two armies faced each other across open fields, just north of the Northamptonshire village of Naseby. Although no one knew it then, in just a few hours the fate of a nation would be set.

The British Civil Wars had been raging across England, Scotland and Ireland for nearly three years but, until a few months before Naseby, neither the Royalists nor the Parliamentarians looked like

# AND FOOT OF HIS MAJESTIES, AND overall bodyes, at the Battayle at NASBYE ; ay of June 1645.



## BATTLE CONTEXT

### Who

#### Royalists

Commanded by Charles I and Prince Rupert: 4,300 foot, 5,500 horse

#### Parliamentarians

Led by Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell: 6,400 foot, 7,200 horse, 1,000 dragoons

### When

14 June 1645

### Where

Naseby, Northamptonshire

### Outcome

Decisive Parliament victory

### Losses

#### Royalists

c1,000 killed, 4,000 captured

#### Parliamentarians

c450 killed and wounded

300

The number of wagons and carriages captured by the Parliamentarians after Naseby

winning it. In 1644, the Royalists had lost large tracts of land in North England, but attempts by the Parliamentarians to destroy their main field army, which was based at Oxford, had come to nothing.

In a bid to break the stalemate, Parliament created a new national force, the New Model Army. Commanded by Sir Thomas Fairfax, made up of regiments from Parliament's other armies, and reinforced by raw recruits and former Royalist prisoners of war, it was well organised and well equipped but untried and untested.

That test would come at Naseby...

### ON CAMPAIGN

When the campaigning season began in 1645, King Charles I decided to march north in a bid to recover some of the territory lost there the year before. But, before leaving, he sent a substantial detachment of men, including 3,000 cavalry, to bolster their forces in the West Country and help with the siege of Parliamentarian Taunton. The move would dangerously weaken his army.

Meanwhile, Fairfax began to lay siege to Oxford, the Royalist capital. Concerned that Oxford would not withstand a lengthy siege, Charles hatched a plan to distract the Parliamentarians. At the end of May, his army stormed and sacked Parliamentarian Leicester. His plan worked. Alarmed by the loss of Leicester, Parliament abandoned the Siege of Oxford and moved to bring the King's main army to battle.

After a week's marching, the two armies finally made contact

with each other. On 12 June, some of Fairfax's cavalry clashed with Royalists near Daventry and then, late on 13 June, Henry Ireton (Oliver Cromwell's future son-in-law) surprised a Royalist outpost while they were playing quoits in the village of Naseby. The presence of the Parliamentarians so near to his main force left Charles, who was still without the men he had sent to the West Country, in a quandary. He could either risk battle against a much larger force, or attempt to retreat with the risk that Fairfax might catch up and

## WHO'S WHO?

Cavalry often wore sashes to identify themselves: the Parliamentarians tawny orange, the Royalists red



attack him as his army was strung out. Thinking that retreat would damage morale and that the experience of his soldiers would make up for their lack of numbers, Charles ignored the advice of his nephew, Prince Rupert, and opted for battle.

## VALLEY OF DEATH

The two armies deployed on the opposite sides of a shallow valley known as Broadmoor. Its sides were flanked by thick parish-boundary hedges.

Both Commanders used a standard formation, deploying their infantry in the centre with cavalry on the wings, although the Royalists interspersed their mounted men with musketeers and kept a brigade in reserve.

The Parliamentarians made smart use of the terrain, placing some of their red-coated infantry behind the crest of a ridge, where they couldn't be seen. Sometime between 9am and 10am, Oliver Cromwell, who had only recently taken command of the Parliamentarian cavalry, ordered

Colonel John Okey to take his regiment of dragoons forward and, using the hedge there as cover, harass Prince Rupert's cavalry on the right flank of the Royalist army. Okey obeyed and, protected from attack by the thick hedge, his men dismounted. While some men held the regiment's horses, the rest opened fire over the hedge. Peppered by musket balls and unable to get at their tormentors, the Royalist cavalry took the only course open to them - they rode off to attack the Parliamentarian cavalry on the far side of the valley.

The opposing wings of horsemen paused briefly to dress ranks before charging each other, firing their pistols at close range and then settling to with their swords. Ireton was in command of the Parliamentarians, and his regiment initially drove back their Royalist opponents. But, when the Royalist second line entered the fray, most of the Parliamentarian horsemen turned and fled, hotly pursued by the triumphant Royalists. Some chased

## KEY PLAYERS

Naseby was one of the few battles at which Charles I and the future leader of the land, Oliver Cromwell, went head-to-head...



### ROYALISTS

#### KING CHARLES I

Though he had no military experience Charles commanded the Royalist army. His most notable success was the defeat of a large Parliamentarian army in Cornwall, in autumn 1644.



#### PRINCE RUPERT

The nephew of Charles I led the Royalist army. He's popularly seen as the archetypal headstrong dashing cavalier but was, in fact, a hard-nosed, competent soldier.



### PARLIAMENTARIANS

#### OLIVER CROMWELL

Cromwell was appointed Commander of Parliament's cavalry at Naseby on Fairfax's request, even though he should have been debarred (see War Winners, above).

## WAR WINNERS

### THE NEW MODEL ARMY

By the end of 1644, Parliament had the military upper hand, but, for various reasons, it hadn't been able to land a knockout blow against the Royalists. Because they'd been raised to fight in specific parts of the country, Parliament's armies were reluctant to travel far; their Commanders frequently failed to co-operate and some held their positions as a result of social standing rather than military ability.

To rectify these problems, Parliament established the New Model Army, a force liable for service in any part of the country. To cut down on political infighting and enable the appointment of

officers who knew what they were doing, the House of Commons passed a bill obliging MPs and members of the House of Lords to resign their commands. A few MPs were allowed to stay on, notably Oliver Cromwell. The new army took to the field in 1645 under the command of Sir Thomas Fairfax, with Cromwell as its General of Horse.

## FIGHTING MEN

Civil Wars soldiers were of three main types: horse (cavalry), dragoons and foot (infantry). Cavalry fought with swords, pistols and short muskets, dragoons rode into battle before dismounting to shoot, while the infantry either carried muskets or pikes. The muskets of the time were, by our standards, slow and inaccurate, so pikemen would protect the musketeers and also provide muscle in hand-to-hand combat.

In battle, it was customary for the infantry to form up in the centre, with cavalry on either flank. Cavalry were supposed to drive off the enemy horsemen in front of them and then turn in to attack the opposing infantry. This was easier said than done. It's hard to rally cavalry who had launched a charge and a wise commander would keep some of his horsemen in reserve.



## ARMED AND DANGEROUS

When war had broken out, it was Parliament who controlled the country's key arsenals. Many soldiers brought along weapons and armour of their own, so there was a wide variety in the equipment used.

### ARMOUR

While all cavalrymen, in both armies, were meant to wear an iron breastplate, backplate and helmet, not everyone actually received one.

### BANDOLIER

Each wooden tube that hangs from this cross-body belt contains enough gunpowder to fire a single shot.

### MATCHLOCK

When a musketeer pulled the trigger, a piece of smouldering cord (the 'match') would ignite the powder in the gun.

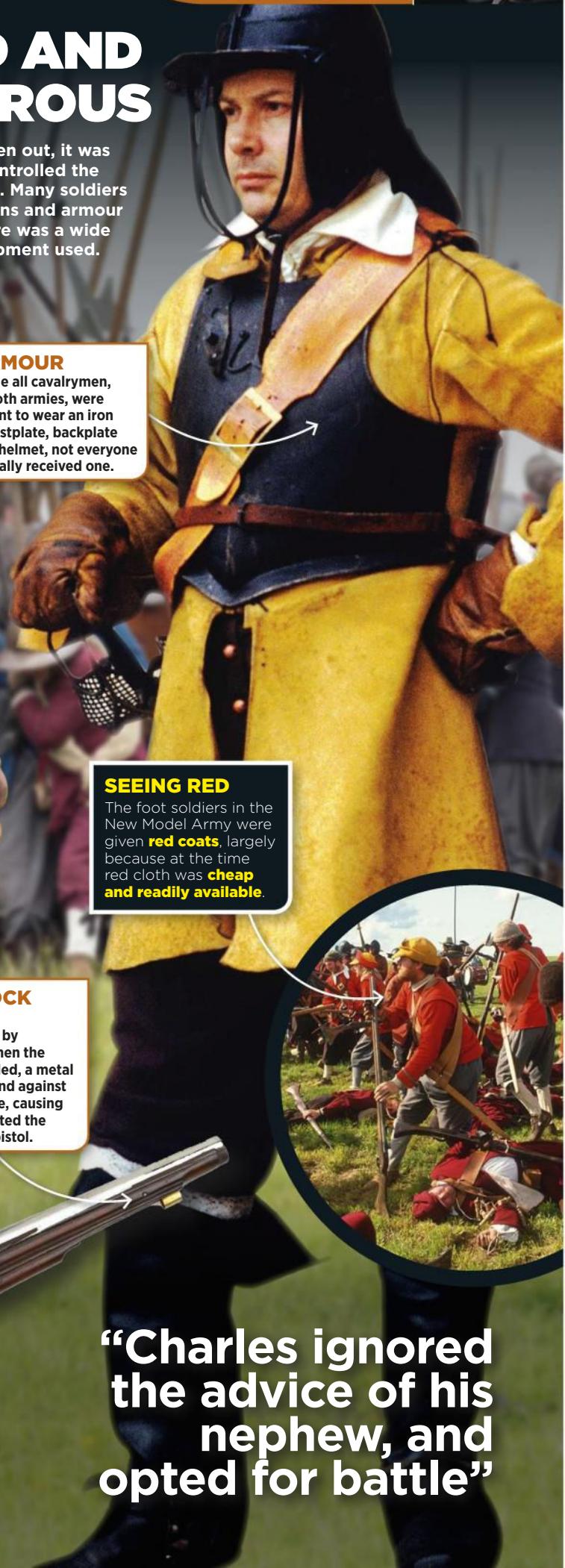
### SEEING RED

The foot soldiers in the New Model Army were given **red coats**, largely because at the time red cloth was **cheap and readily available**.

### WHEELLOCK PISTOL

A weapon used by cavalrymen. When the trigger was pulled, a metal wheel spun round against some iron pyrite, causing sparks that ignited the powder in the pistol.

“Charles ignored the advice of his nephew, and opted for battle”





## BATTLEFIELD NASEBY, 14 JUNE 1645

their defeated enemies for miles, while others galloped off in an unsuccessful bid to attack the Parliamentarian baggage train, which they found some distance to the rear of Fairfax's army.

It may have been first blood to the Royalist right wing, but all of its cavalry had been committed to the fight, and none remained to follow up their success by attacking the Parliamentarian infantry. In fact, by the time Rupert's horsemen eventually returned from their pursuit, the battle was all but lost.

Back on the field, the foot regiments of the two armies had come together. Despite the odds stacked against them, the Royalist infantry initially gained the upper

back in disorder. Philip Skippon, the New Model Army's veteran commander, was wounded in the ribs by a musket ball, but stayed on the field to encourage his hard-pressed infantry.

### A NUMBERS GAME

Eventually, the numbers began to tell. Fairfax was able to order forward his reserves and the

Royalist advance stalled.

The outnumbered Royalist infantry soon found itself under severe pressure, and things were about to get worse. Oliver Cromwell's horsemen had driven back Marmaduke Langdale's Royalist cavalry and were now threatening their rear. With

**3**  
The approximate duration of the battle, in hours

## “The Royalists were on them, wading in with swords and muskets”

hand. The Parliamentarians had positioned guns between their regiments, but their salvos went high and their musketeers probably only managed one volley before the Royalists were on them, wading in with swords and the butt ends of their muskets. Edward Walker, King Charles's secretary, later recalled seeing the Parliamentarian colours fall to the ground as their first line was driven

a considerable advantage in numbers, Cromwell did not need to commit all his horsemen to the fighting, so he sent part of his force to pursue Langdale's men, while using the rest against the flank and rear of the Royalist infantry.

To add to the woes of the Royalist infantry, Okey's dragoons had now mounted up and joined the fight, charging into their right flank.

## LOST REPUTATION

Charles didn't just lose his army at Naseby – he also lost his correspondence. The capture of the King's personal letters provided the Parliamentarians with a propaganda opportunity that they were quick to exploit. Letters from his Queen showed that she had been trying to obtain reinforcements on his behalf from the Catholic powers in Europe. When Parliament made this known, attitudes towards the King on the part of many of his Protestant subjects hardened, and with it came an increased determination to fight the war to a finish.



**TROUBLESOME QUEEN**  
Charles I and his Catholic wife, Henrietta Maria of France

The game was clearly up. Some Royalist infantrymen began to carry out a fighting retreat, though many surrendered. As those Royalists that could fall back, they were covered by Prince Rupert's blue-coated infantry. One onlooker described them as standing "like a wall of brasse". They held their ground until Fairfax launched an attack from all sides with infantry and cavalry. (The discovery of a large number of musket balls has pinpointed the location of the bluecoats' last stand, and a memorial now marks the spot.)

It is said that, at some stage, King Charles attempted to lead a counter-attack with his lifeguard, but was prevented from doing so

by a Scottish courtier who seized the bridle of his horse, as he asked: "Would you go upon your death?" before leading him away.

The Royalists continued to retreat north, occasionally halting to fight off their pursuers. Many are believed to have been cut down when cornered at Marston Trussell village, after taking a wrong turn.

Not all the casualties were male. Claiming they were Irish whores, Parliamentarian troops killed or mutilated between 100 and 200 women they found with the Royalist baggage train. In fact, they were probably Welsh-speaking wives of some of Charles's soldiers.

The Royalist army had been destroyed. A thousand of its soldiers had died and more than 4,000 had been captured. Parliament's ultimate victory was now just a matter of time. ◎



**DEATH OF A KING**  
Charles I lost his head on a chilly January morning in 1649

Found guilty, the King was executed on 27 January and the monarchy abolished. For the next 11 years, England would be a republic.

## GET HOOKED

Find out more about the battle and those involved

### VISIT

Naseby is a particularly rewarding battlefield to visit. There's little doubt over what happened and where, and there are a number of excellent viewpoints, each with an information panel. For more details visit [www.naseby.com](http://www.naseby.com)



Was Naseby the most important battle in the British Civil Wars?

Email: [editor@historyrevealed.com](mailto:editor@historyrevealed.com)

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# 1944 D-DAY LANDINGS

British and Canadian troops land on Juno Beach on the morning of 6 June 1944, many carrying bicycles. As part of Operation Overlord – the invasion of Europe and the Battle of Normandy – the landings that began on D-Day would be the largest seaborne invasion ever undertaken.

The Allies suffered over 10,000 casualties on D-Day alone, but their sacrifice led to the liberation of Europe from Nazi terror and, within a year, the end of World War II in Europe.







STORM AFTER  
THE CALM

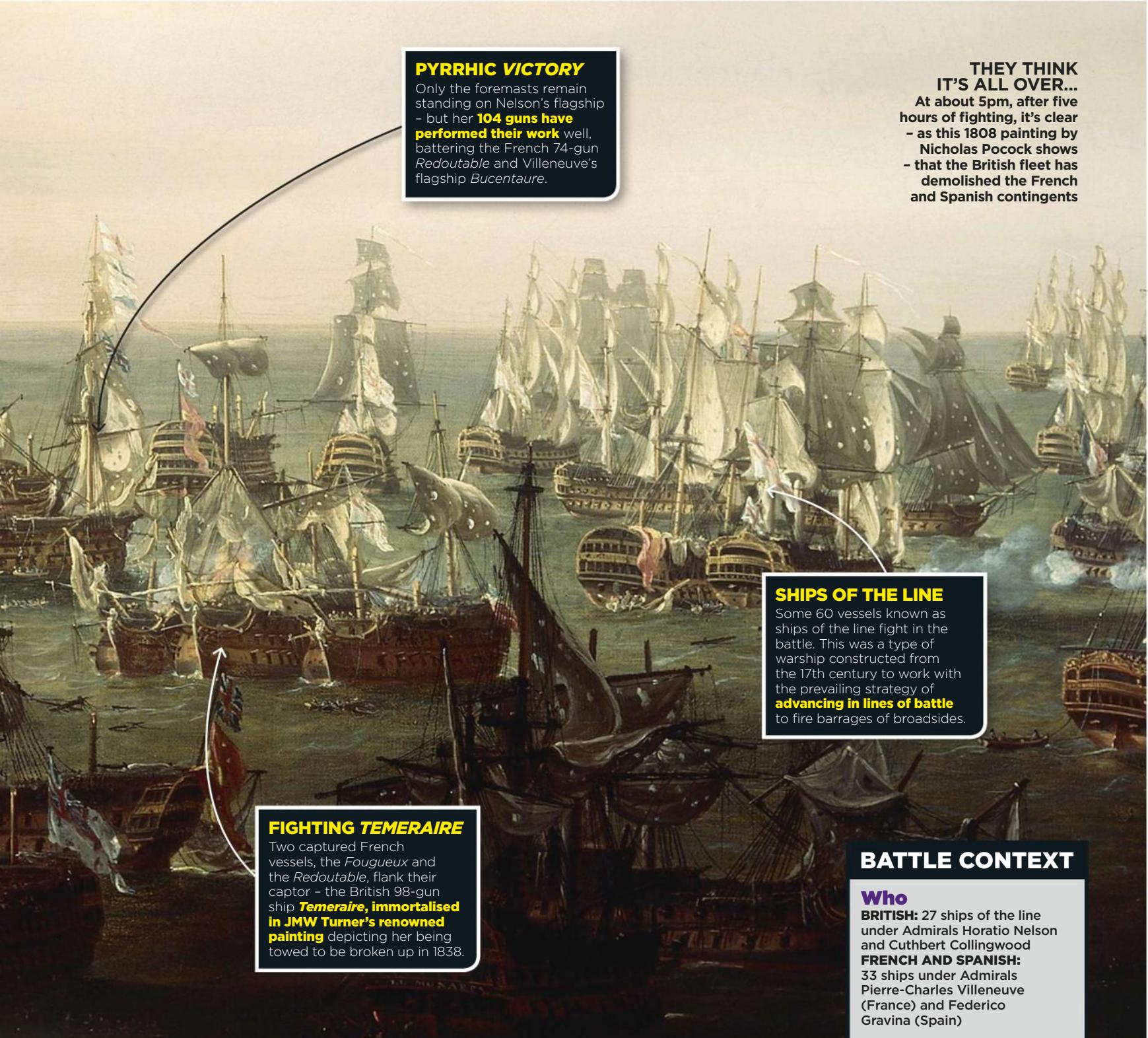
Some 11 allied ships escape at the end of the battle, but in the **powerful storm** that blows up shortly afterwards, several French and Spanish vessels are wrecked or further damaged.



# Trafalgar: Nelson's last great victory

Admiral Nelson's crushing defeat of the French and Spanish navies at the **Battle of Trafalgar** in 1805 would establish Britain as the dominant world naval power for the next century. This is the story of Nelson's victory – and his death

**T**he battle plan that Nelson had formulated for Trafalgar was a simple one – but it came at the end of a long and complicated campaign. In May 1803, the brief Peace of Amiens between Britain and France had ended and the two nations were once again at war. Napoleon, who had been crowned Emperor of the French in December 1804, decided to invade England and assembled a large army on the French coast around Boulogne. His plan was to ferry his troops across the English



Channel on barges. But before he could attempt such an expedition, he had to gain control of the Channel.

In March 1805, a French fleet under the command of Admiral Pierre-Charles Villeneuve sailed out of Toulon and, after linking up with ships from France's new ally, Spain, made for the West Indies. The plan was to rendezvous with more French ships, creating a fleet large enough to dominate the Channel. Admiral Horatio Nelson, though, was determined to prevent this from happening.

Having searched for Villeneuve's fleet in the Mediterranean, Nelson

gave chase and, by early June, he too was in the Caribbean. The harassed Villeneuve re-crossed the Atlantic but, with Nelson having warned the Admiralty of the French fleet's movements, he was intercepted off Cape Finisterre by an English fleet under Sir Robert Calder. He was forced to turn south and, in September, took refuge in Cádiz.

#### BATTLE STATIONS

With no fleet to protect his invasion force, Napoleon abandoned his plans to invade Britain and instead moved east to deal with the armies of Britain's allies, Austria and Russia.

Villeneuve, though, was left bottled up in Cádiz, blockaded by a British fleet commanded by Nelson. Three weeks into October, under pressure from Napoleon, Villeneuve finally attempted to break out and sail into the Mediterranean.

Nelson was waiting for him. The well-drilled British crews 'cleared for action', removing anything that might get in the way during the ensuing battle, dousing flammable materials with water and scattering sand on the decks to prevent the men from slipping. Meanwhile, down below, the ships' surgeons were preparing temporary

#### BATTLE CONTEXT

##### Who

**BRITISH:** 27 ships of the line under Admirals Horatio Nelson and Cuthbert Collingwood

**FRENCH AND SPANISH:** 33 ships under Admirals Pierre-Charles Villeneuve (France) and Federico Gravina (Spain)

**When**  
21 October 1805

**Where**  
Cape Trafalgar, south of Cádiz off the south-west coast of Spain.

**Why**  
The Franco-Spanish fleet attempted to break out of Cádiz past a British blockade.

**Outcome**  
British victory. The French and Spanish lost 18 ships captured or destroyed, and at least 3,000 dead. The British lost about 500 men but no ships.



## TRAfalgar, 1805

# “Collingwood paced the deck of his ship, calmly eating an apple”

hospitals and laying out the grim tools of their trade.

Once in sight of the enemy, the drummers of the Royal Marines ‘beat to quarters’ – the signal for the crews to take up their action stations. As the British ships closed in on their enemies, Nelson ordered a signal to be displayed aboard his flagship HMS Victory: “England expects that every man will do his duty.” Admiral Collingwood, Nelson’s second-in-command, was not impressed. “I do wish Nelson would stop signalling,” he muttered. “We all know well enough what to do.”

In fact, Collingwood’s acerbic comment contained an important truth: Nelson’s captains did indeed know what to do. While off the coast of Spain, Nelson had invited them to dinner on board Victory and personally explained his plan for the approaching battle.

Traditional naval tactics would have seen the two fleets deployed in two long parallel lines but, instead, Nelson planned to attack in two columns. One, led by Collingwood, would attack the rear of the enemy line of battle while the other, led by Nelson, would tackle the centre. By breaking the allied line of battle in this way, Nelson would bring about a series of ship-to-ship actions in which the superior British seamanship and gunnery

**6,000**

Oaks and elms were felled to obtain the wood needed to build HMS Victory

would prove decisive. It would also force ships in the vanguard of the enemy fleet to turn back to support the ships at the rear, which would take a long time. Finally, he gave his captains freedom of action by telling them: “No captain can do very wrong if he places his ship alongside that of the enemy.”

Such a head-on attack would inevitably expose his ships to a torrent of gunnery with no opportunity to reply. To minimise the damage sustained,

Nelson aimed to close with the enemy as quickly as possible. He ordered his ships to carry their full complement of sails, and put his largest battleships at the front of his columns. Collingwood’s ship,

the *Royal Sovereign*, was the first into action. It broke the Franco-Spanish line at about noon and fought alone for 20 minutes before the rest of the fleet could join it. Collingwood paced the deck of his ship, ignoring pleas to remove his conspicuous cocked hat. “Let me alone,” he replied. “I have always fought in a cocked hat, and always shall.” He carried on pacing, calmly eating an apple.

As Victory approached the enemy line at the head of the second column, she took a heavy battering. Her ship’s wheel was

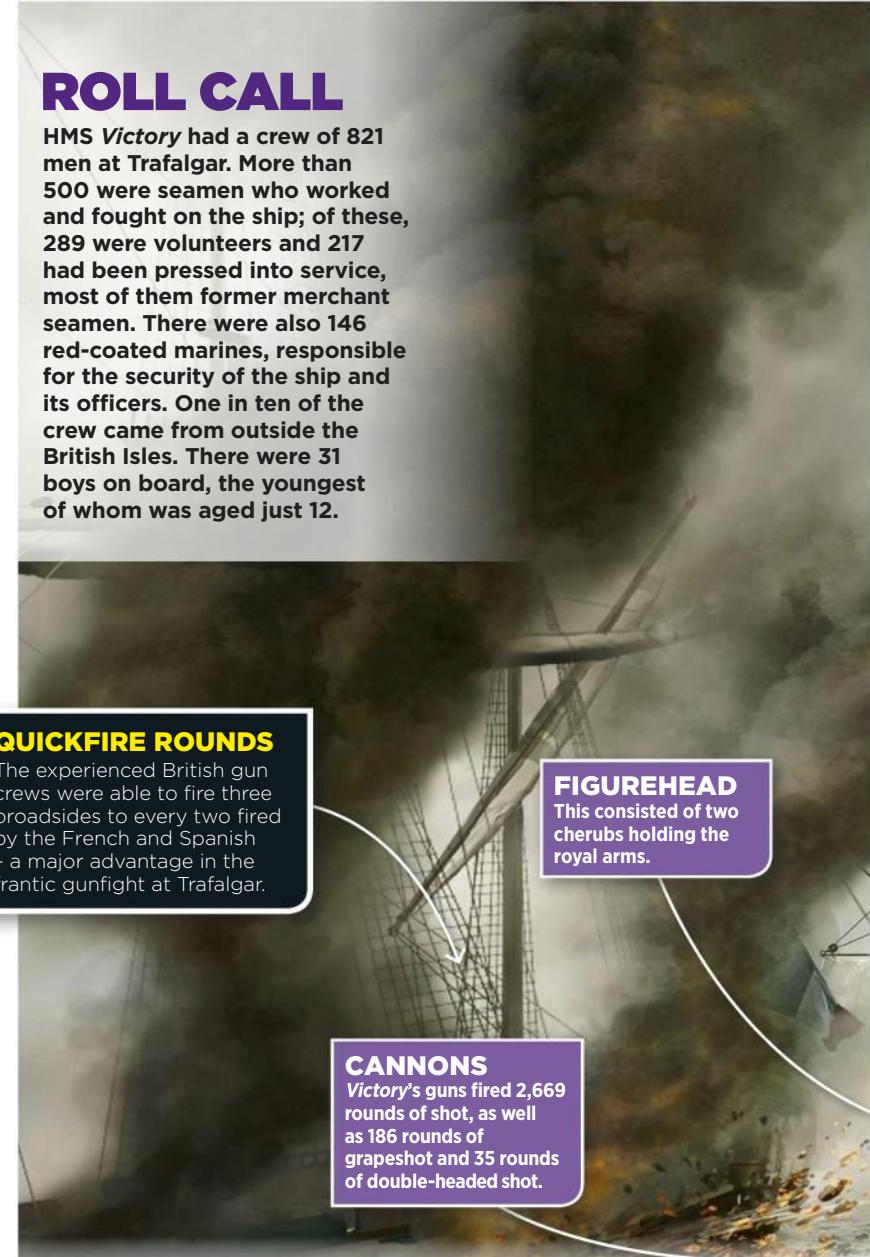
## WEAPONS OF MAST DESTRUCTION

HMS Victory carried 104 cannon at Trafalgar. To load and fire one in the heat of battle took training and practice. A fabric or paper cartridge of gunpowder was rammed down the barrel, followed by a rope wad to hold it in place, the shot, then a second wad. A hole in the cartridge was made by pushing a wire pricker into the vent, and gunpowder was poured in. The gun was then fired either by a spark from a flintlock or by a smouldering match held to the vent.



## ROLL CALL

HMS Victory had a crew of 821 men at Trafalgar. More than 500 were seamen who worked and fought on the ship; of these, 289 were volunteers and 217 had been pressed into service, most of them former merchant seamen. There were also 146 red-coated marines, responsible for the security of the ship and its officers. One in ten of the crew came from outside the British Isles. There were 31 boys on board, the youngest of whom was aged just 12.



### QUICKFIRE ROUNDS

The experienced British gun crews were able to fire three broadsides to every two fired by the French and Spanish – a major advantage in the frantic gunfight at Trafalgar.

### FIGUREHEAD

This consisted of two cherubs holding the royal arms.

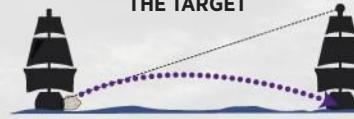
### CANNONS

Victory’s guns fired 2,669 rounds of shot, as well as 186 rounds of grapeshot and 35 rounds of double-headed shot.

## FIRING LINES

Whereas the French and Spanish usually tried to disable an enemy ship by firing at its masts, the British often fired at an enemy ship’s hull – but accurately judging distance and trajectory took skill and experience.

1,200 METRES AWAY FROM THE TARGET



800 METRES AWAY FROM THE TARGET



### 32-POUNDER CANNON

Named after the weight of the shot it could fire. Victory carried 30 of these at Trafalgar.

### DIRK

A long dagger carried by midshipmen and used when boarding another ship.





TRAFAVGAR,  
1805



LIVING MUSEUM  
Today, HMS Victory is  
preserved at Portsmouth's  
Historic Dockyard

shot away, but still she kept on coming. As she sailed past the stern of Villeneuve's flagship *Bucentaure*, Victory's well-trained gunners were at last able to fire, unleashing a devastating broadside. Shot smashed through the French ship, disabling 20 of her guns, killing and wounding 200 of her men and effectively putting her out of action.

As more and more British ships came into action, French and Spanish casualties began to mount. Captain Servaux of the French ship *Fougueux* described the effects of one of the *Royal Sovereign*'s broadsides: "Most of the sails and rigging were cut to pieces, while the upper deck was swept clear of the greater number of the seamen working there, and of the soldier sharpshooters."

Sailors suffered horrific wounds.

Men were disembowelled or had limbs or heads shot off – a single French cannonball killed eight marines on the poop deck of *HMS Victory*. Balls smashed into decks and bulwarks, tearing off jagged splinters of wood that caused terrible injuries to anyone they hit. Men were crushed by falling spars and masts or loose cannon. Those on the gun decks

were deafened by the noise and blinded by the smoke from their guns but were better off than men on the exposed upper decks.

After dealing with the *Bucentaure*, Nelson's flagship found itself locked in combat with another French ship, the *Redoutable*. While Victory's gunners blazed away below decks, sharpshooters up in the masts of the *Redoutable* opened a withering fire upon the British ship's exposed quarterdeck. Thomas Hardy, Victory's captain, gave the order to take cover but Nelson continued to pace the deck in his distinctive admiral's uniform – and soon the inevitable happened: he was struck in the shoulder by a musket ball that passed through a lung and hit his spine.

Nelson was carried down to the orlop deck in agony and died at about 4.30pm – but not before he'd heard the news that the battle had been won. Seventeen enemy ships had been captured and one had blown up.

No sooner had the battle ended than a savage storm blew up, and the British struggled in heavy seas to save their own damaged ships as well as the ships they'd captured. In the end, they saved all of their

**26**

The miles of ropes and rigging used on the three masts of *HMS Victory*

**"Men were deafened by the noise and blinded by the smoke of their guns"**

## WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

Britain ruled the waves – despite Napoleon's plans

The immediate effects of Trafalgar were relatively minor. Napoleon had already relinquished his plan to invade England and instead headed eastwards, crushing Britain's allies Russia and Austria at the Battle of Austerlitz in December. But the long-term impacts were massive. The Royal Navy now ruled the oceans unchallenged, so could protect Britain from invasion, continue its blockade of French ports, shield trade interests, and support military operations across the globe. Hoping to create a navy that could once again challenge the British, Napoleon instituted a large shipbuilding programme, but fell from power before it could be completed. He returned from exile to lead his army to a decisive defeat at Waterloo in June 1815.

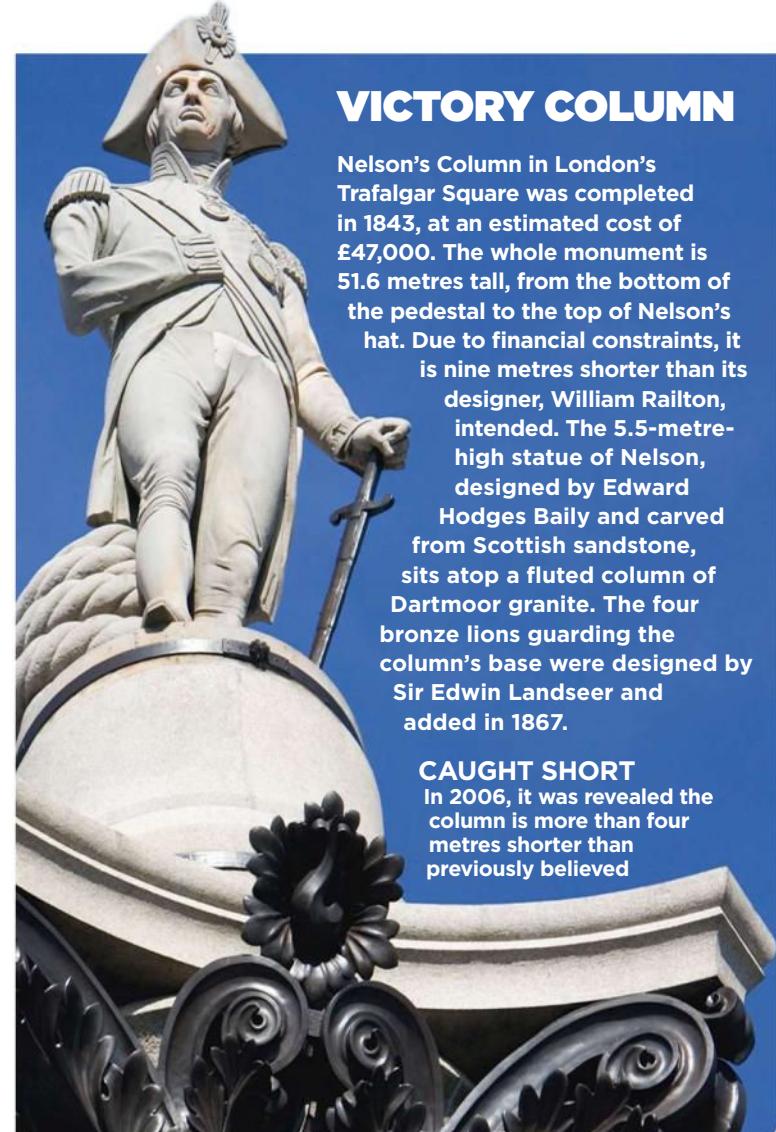


## VICTORY COLUMN

Nelson's Column in London's Trafalgar Square was completed in 1843, at an estimated cost of £47,000. The whole monument is 51.6 metres tall, from the bottom of the pedestal to the top of Nelson's hat. Due to financial constraints, it is nine metres shorter than its designer, William Railton, intended. The 5.5-metre-high statue of Nelson, designed by Edward Hodges Baily and carved from Scottish sandstone, sits atop a fluted column of Dartmoor granite. The four bronze lions guarding the column's base were designed by Sir Edwin Landseer and added in 1867.

### CAUGHT SHORT

In 2006, it was revealed the column is more than four metres shorter than previously believed



own ships and four of their prizes; the rest sank or were wrecked, or were destroyed by the British to prevent recapture by the French.

Two days after the battle, five surviving allied ships made a daring sortie from Cádiz and managed to recapture two ships. However, one of these was subsequently wrecked, along with three of the rescuers. Finally, on 4 November, four fugitive

allied ships were intercepted and captured in the Bay of Biscay.

When the final ripples of the battle had died away, the allies had lost no fewer than 24 ships out of their combined fleet of 33. No British ships had been lost. ☀

## GET HOOKED!

Find out more about the battle and those involved

### EXPLORE HMS VICTORY

Visit Portsmouth's Historic Dockyard to see Nelson's cabin and stand on the spot where he received his mortal wound. [www.historicdockyard.co.uk](http://www.historicdockyard.co.uk)

### BOOKS & FILM

Patrick O'Brian's novels of the Napoleonic Wars offer an accurate depiction of naval life. Russell Crowe starred in the 2003 film of *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*.



**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

Was Trafalgar Britain's greatest naval victory – or is there a stronger contender?  
email: [editor@historyrevealed.com](mailto:editor@historyrevealed.com)



# 1950 KOREAN ADVANCE

British infantrymen march to the front line in Taegu during the Korean War, in September 1950. While the United States sent considerably more troops to Korea than the UK, Britain still maintained a sizeable force in south-east Asia.

The war came about as a result of the partitioning of Korea at the end of World War II. When North Korea invaded the South, the relatively newly formed United Nations came to South Korea's aid. In turn, China came to the aid of the North, backed by the Soviet Union.

An armistice was signed in 1953, but with no peace treaty ever having been signed, the two countries are still technically at war to this day.





WATERLOO,  
1815

LIBERTÉ, ÉGALITÉ, FRATERNITÉ  
Napoleon's cavalry ride into battle in  
Sergey Bondarchuk's 1970 film, *Waterloo*



# The Battle of Waterloo

ALAMY X1, BRIDGEMAN IMAGES X1

Having staged an impressive return, Napoleon's hopes of victory were high. But in one bloody day, his dreams of French glory and domination would be shattered



### CAPTURE THE FLAG

This painting depicts Sergeant Ewart of the Scots Greys capturing a French eagle – one of two taken on the day. When Ewart retired, he **opened a pub** near Edinburgh Castle, which now bears his name.

### CORDON BLEU

While Wellington's soldiers were low on rations, one of the reasons his troops were able to withdraw so easily from Quatre Bras, on 17 June, was because Napoleon's veterans **took their time** cooking and **eating breakfast**.



### BATTLE CONTEXT

#### French

**Commander** Napoleon  
**Infantry** 53,400  
**Cavalry** 15,600  
**Total** 69,000  
**Guns** 246  
**Losses** at least 25,000  
**Aim** to break the Duke of Wellington's army  
**Advantages** slightly larger numbers; far more artillery; more experienced soldiers

#### Anglo-Dutch

**Commander** Wellington  
**Infantry** 53,800  
**Cavalry** 13,335  
**Total** 67,135  
**Guns** 157  
**Losses** c14,400-15,000  
**Aim** to hold out until the Prussians arrive  
**Advantages** a strong defensive position; ridge to give some shelter from enemy artillery; Wellington's active command

#### Prussian

**Commander** Blücher  
**Infantry** 38,000  
**Cavalry** 7,000  
**Total** 45,000 (although most arrived as the day wore on)  
**Guns** 134  
**Losses** c4,800-7,000  
**Aim** to reach the battle, so the allies outnumber the French  
**Advantages** Blücher's determination; his chief of staff's administrative skill; his soldiers' deep hatred of the French

#### Outcome

Allied victory. While some claim this outcome was all down to the Prussians, others believe Wellington would have coped alone. The truth is simple. Wellington only risked battle after receiving Blücher's promise of aid. From the beginning, this was an allied effort and it was an allied victory – the credit is shared between all involved.

**O**n the morning of the battle, Wellington's soldiers woke cold and wet after a day and night of drenching rain. One officer wrote that "it rained as if the water were tumbled out of tubs." Few had slept under cover, and many had little or no food apart from what they had found and stolen. Wellington had given strict orders

against looting, but many hungry men ignored them. Of his 68,000 troops, only a minority wore the scarlet jackets of the British and Hanoverian infantry, and there were Dutch and Belgians in blue, Germans from the little state of Nassau in green, and Brunswickers in sombre black. It was a colourful army, even though most were liberally spattered with mud.

As the hours passed, they watched Napoleon review his

soldiers, bands playing, cavalry and infantry parading in their own colourful splendour in a display of strength. Slowed by the mud and waiting for the last of his soldiers to arrive, the Emperor was not ready to attack until nearly noon. Wellington's men took up their positions and waited. There were two strong points ahead of the ridge, the chateau at Hougoumont on his right, and the farm of La Haye de Sainte just to the left





## WATERLOO, 1815

of his centre. His main force was sheltered behind the ridge, arranged so that the different nationalities were mixed together, as were his veterans and his raw troops. His aim was to prevent any section of the line being too weak.

### OFF WITH A BANG

The battle began when lines of French field guns started pounding the allied position. It was the loudest noise most of Wellington's soldiers would ever hear, but only a few units were exposed to the deluge of cannon balls, and most were protected by the ridge – unlike the Prussians at Ligny who had suffered badly under a similar barrage.

The first French attack came at Hougoumont, held by a detachment of Foot Guards as well as German troops. Over the afternoon, a large part of one of the three-army corps – which, together with the Imperial Guard made up the bulk of Napoleon's army – became sucked into the attack on the chateau. At the same time, many of Wellington's troops were pinned in place protecting it. Part of the chateau was set ablaze by French howitzers, and there were several break-ins. One saw French light infantry surge into the main courtyard, but a party led by Lieutenant Colonel MacDonnell of the Scots Guards and a sergeant managed to bar the gate behind them. All the French were killed in a savage hand-to-hand brawl.

While this fight raged, Napoleon launched his main attack with another corps commanded by General D'Erlon. Covered by a heavy barrage, infantry attacked La Haye de Sainte and the ridge to the east. A Netherlands brigade that had fought well at Quatre Bras but

suffered heavy losses there, broke before the onslaught.

The French columns kept going, and next met with Picton's British troops – veterans of the Peninsular War, who had also lost many at Quatre Bras. Picton, a rough, foul-mouthed Welshmen dressed in civilian garb because his uniform had not arrived, was shot in the head and killed, but the French advance was stalled. Even so, numbers were on their side, and the situation was critical.

Then Wellington launched his heavy cavalry – a brigade of Life Guards, the Blues and King's Dragoon Guards, and the Union Brigade with a regiment of dragoons each from England, Scotland and Ireland.

The French infantry were not in formation to meet a cavalry charge and were ridden down: "As we approached at a moderate pace, the fronts and flanks began to turn their backs inwards; the rear of the columns had already begun to run away," wrote one staff officer. Two precious eagle standards were captured – Sergeant Ewart of the

## THE IMPENETRABLE SQUARE

The infantry in all armies of this period used the square to defend against cavalry, but the British squares at Waterloo became famous. With the men four deep and facing in all directions, the cavalry could not get at the infantry, but it took a steady nerve for the foot soldiers to stay in formation. Sometimes they were so terrified of the approaching cavalry that they broke ranks and were slaughtered. At Waterloo, the British stayed firm.

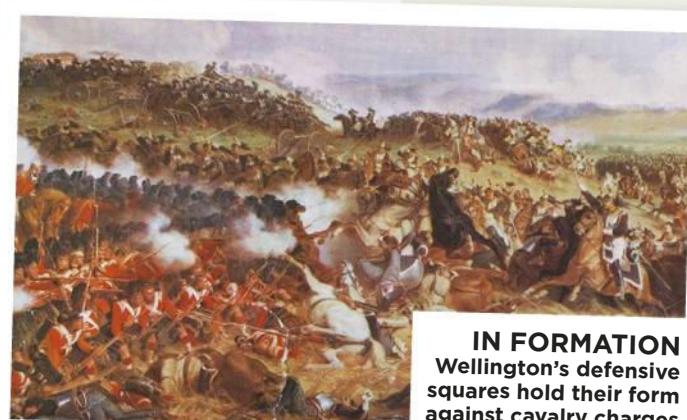
### SMART HORSES

Unlike their riders, horses will not run into a seemingly solid object. If the men in the square did not flee, then the horses would stop or flow around to ride through the gaps between the squares.



### FRENCH CUIRASSIERS

Big men on big horses, the sight of cuirassiers bearing down was often enough to make the enemy flee. Their armour would not stop a bullet at close range.



**IN FORMATION**  
Wellington's defensive squares hold their form against cavalry charges



## THE KEY PLAYERS

To many, Waterloo was a grudge match between Napoleon and Wellington, but there was another general in the mix.



**EMPEROR NAPOLEON**  
Born in Corsica in 1769, his family sent him to France a child to attend military school. After graduating, he quickly rose to military prominence and made himself Emperor. After defeat and exile, he returned to France in 1815.



**DUKE OF WELLINGTON**  
The Anglo-Dutch commander at Waterloo was born in Ireland in 1769. His military skills first impressed in India and then again in the Peninsular War. He later became British Prime Minister.



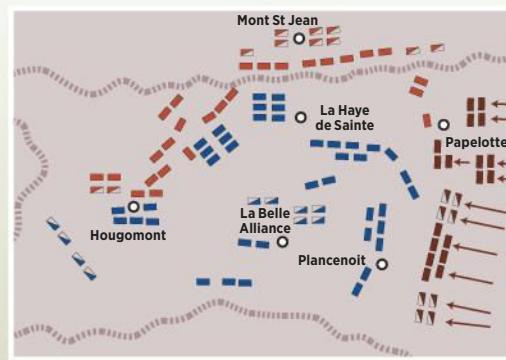
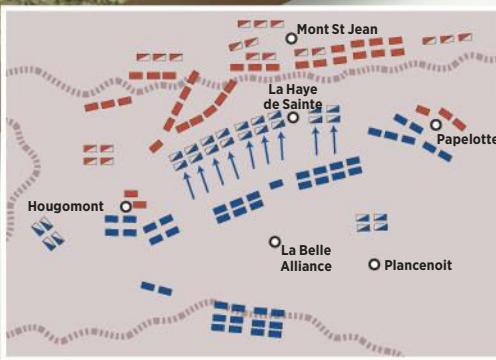
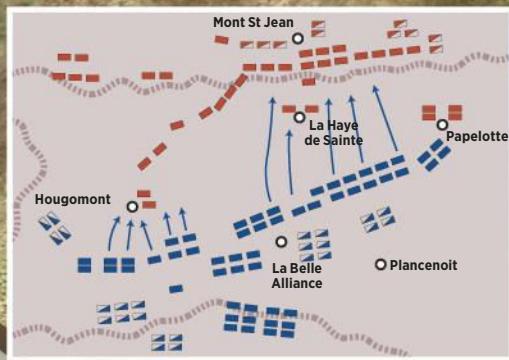
**FIELD MARSHAL GEBHARD LEBRECHT VON BLÜCHER**  
Born in Mecklenburg (modern-day Germany), in 1742, this fiery, aggressive chap fought for the Swedish and then the Prussian armies, leading the latter at Waterloo.

## DEADLY WEAPONS

In one day, Waterloo saw such carnage that this battle is easily comparable to the first day of the Somme. Perhaps it is unsurprising, then, that the soldiers were equipped with the most advanced weapons, ammunition and specialised equipment of the time...



Anglo-Dutch	Prussian	French
Cavalry	■	■
Infantry	■	■



### 1 ATTACKING THE STRONGPOINTS

The battle begins with Napoleon's diversionary attack on chateau Hougoumont, in order to make a more full-on assault on the allied centre. But the British do not fall into the trap. The struggle for Hougoumont and La Haye de Sainte themselves become battles that grind down the French.

### 2 CAVALRY CHARGES

The allies reorganise their positions. Believing they are dealing with a retreat, the French carry on with their cavalry charges. Despite their ferocity, the horsemen are repelled and suffer heavy casualties attacking the allied infantry deployed in squares.

### 3 THE FINAL PUSH

Napoleon orders his Imperial Guard to attack the allied centre. Enough allies are left to repulse them with heavy volleys of musketry, and at the same time the Prussian onslaught against Napoleon's right becomes overwhelming. The French army flees.

### ROCKETS

A British secret weapon, rockets were extremely imprecise and sometimes came back at their firers.



### FLINTLOCK MUSKET

The standard infantry weapon, it was inaccurate beyond about 75 metres, so best used in massed volleys at short range.



### SWORD OR SABRE

Most cavalry relied on a straight or curved sword. Thrusts were the most deadly, but cuts and slashes caused horrifically disfiguring wounds.



### ROUNDSHOT

The standard projectile of the artillery was a solid iron ball meant to smash through the target.



## OBJECTS OF WAR

Two centuries on from the battle, a remarkable number of objects have been collected, preserved and, now, collated by the Waterloo 200 project. You can view all of the items online at [www.nam.ac.uk/waterloo200](http://www.nam.ac.uk/waterloo200), but here are our top picks...



### GOLDEN EAGLE

This French Eagle standard of the 105th Regiment was captured by the British at the Battle of Waterloo. Every regiment had its own eagle, which was a symbol of the unit and was guarded fiercely.



### DENTURES OF DEATH

A set of chompers entirely made up of teeth looted from the mouths of the dead after the battle.

### NAPOLEON'S BURNOUS

An Egyptian-style cloak, worn by Napoleon the night before Waterloo. After his invasion of Egypt in 1798, Napoleon became fascinated by Middle Eastern style and fashions.



### LUCKY PENNY

This coin saved the life of a British soldier by stopping a French musket-ball. A George III 'cartwheel penny', it is unusually large and thick.



### FRENCH CUIRASS

A piece of armour worn by a French cavalryman who was killed at Waterloo after a cannonball smashed through his chest.

### WELLINGTON'S BOOTS

Sadly not made of rubber, these are Wellington's actual boots. The Duke popularised such medium-length leather boots, from which modern-day wellies evolved.

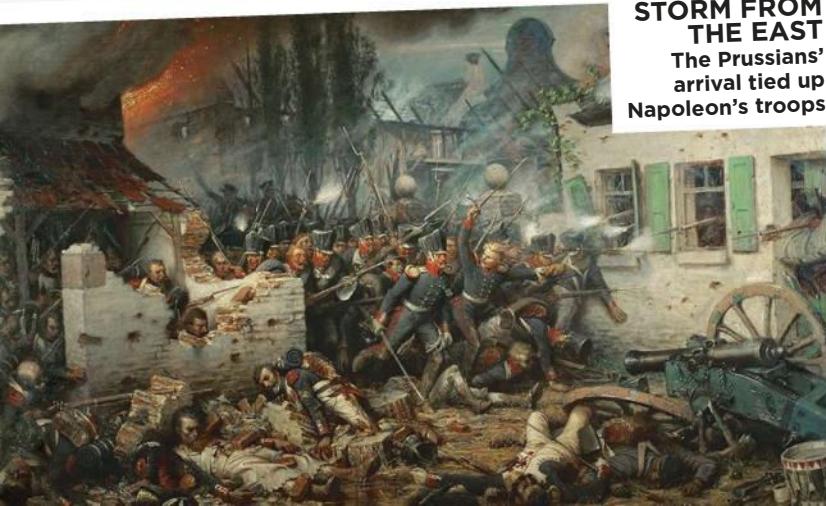
Scots Greys described how the eagle-bearer "Thrust for my groin – I parried it off, and... cut him through the head." Another man came at him on horseback, and "I cut him through the chin upwards, which cut through his teeth. Next I was attacked by a foot soldier..." whose shot missed. Ewart parried the thrust bayonet and "cut him down through the head." D'Erlon's attack was broken, thousands

killed, wounded or captured, but the British cavalry chased them too far. Scattered, their horses blown, they were in turn hunted down by French cavalry. Less than half of the British returned from the attack.

### SQUARE UP

La Haye de Sainte held, defended by greencoated veterans of the King's German Legion – Hanoverians serving George III,

**"Solid iron cannon balls carved swathes through the squares, smashing flesh and bone"**



**STORM FROM  
THE EAST**  
The Prussians' arrival tied up Napoleon's troops

who was the ruler of their state. In the east, the first Prussians began to arrive, and forced Napoleon to commit his remaining infantry corps to protect that flank. For the moment, that meant that the only fresh troops available to continue the attack on Wellington were the cavalry reserve. Ney led more and more of these forward in charges against the ridge. The attacks were funnelled through the gap between Hougoumont and La Haye de Sainte, in ground soon

churned into thick mud by the horses' hooves.

Wellington's infantry formed squares, each face four ranks deep, the front two kneeling with bayonets pointing up. No horse would impale itself on such an obstacle, but it took a steady nerve to hold this position in the face of a line of tall horsemen on big horses bearing down. One sergeant said of the French cuirassiers that he "Thought we could not have the slightest chance with them."

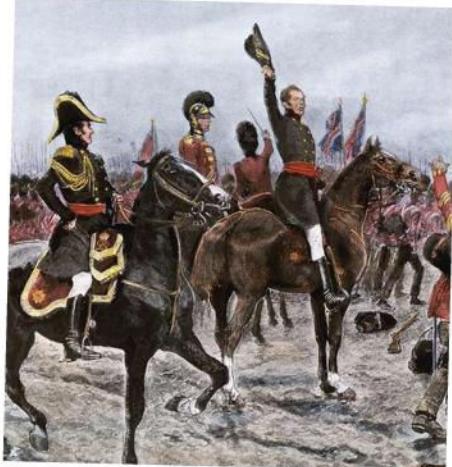
64%

The casualty rate of the 1/27th Inniskillings – the highest rate of any British battalion at Waterloo

Yet the squares held firm, and volleys of musketry brought down men and horses, forming obstacles to the next charge. The French kept on attacking, and every time the cavalry withdrew to reform, their artillery savaged the squares, which offered wonderfully dense targets. The mud helped absorb some of the missiles, but even so, solid iron cannon balls carved swathes through the squares, smashing flesh and bone. The infantry did not break, but they were steadily ground down. It was almost a relief when the cavalry charged again and the guns had to stop firing – one witness remembered someone in a square shouting “Here come those damned fools again!”

### ONE LAST GAMBLE

The garrison of La Haye de Sainte ran out of ammunition and the farm fell around 6pm. The Prussians were driving in Napoleon's right flank and so



### GIVE THE SIGNAL

**Wellington orders the entire British line to advance**

he decided on one last gamble to break Wellington. At about 7.30pm, seven battalions of his Imperial Guard struck the centre of the ridge, but were repulsed after a fierce fight. The sight of these famous veterans retreating and the news of the Prussian advance snapped the willpower of the rest

of the French army and they broke. Wellington waved his hat and the remnants of his army advanced. The British general had spent the day on the move, sheltering in squares when necessary, and always managing to be where he was needed. He had won, but at great cost and, as he put it, the battle was “the nearest-run thing you ever saw in your life.” ☀

AKG X1, ALAMY X3, GETTY X1, ENGLISH HERITAGE X1, MUSÉE DE L'ARMÉE XI, NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM X2

## WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

The French weren't quite knocked out yet...

As his army collapsed into retreat, Napoleon took shelter in a solid square of Imperial Guardsmen before making his escape. The Prussians chased after the French. Wellington's men sank down for an exhausted rest on the battlefield, surrounded by some 43,000 dead and wounded men and 12,000 fallen horses.

The war was not quite over. Grouchy fought a skilful delaying action on 19 June and there was resistance to the allied advance in several fortified towns. Yet it was soon obvious that Napoleon could not recover from this defeat. The allies were at Paris by the beginning of July, and Napoleon surrendered to the British. This time, the Emperor



### BANISHED AGAIN

**Napoleon boards the ship that will take him to St Helena**

was exiled to the far-less accessible South Atlantic island of St Helena. He died six years later.

# GET HOOKED

Delve further into the story of Waterloo – there's plenty to see, read and watch...

### PLACES TO SEE



#### WATERLOO BATTLEFIELD, BELGIUM

The battlefield at Waterloo is well worth a visit. An artificial hill rises some 40m above the battle site, with a panel to show how the action would have played out in the fields below.

[www.waterloo-tourisme.com](http://www.waterloo-tourisme.com)

#### ALSO VISIT

- Chateau Hougoumont an atmospheric site of the battle, Waterloo, Belgium
- Lion's Mound the monument at Waterloo, Belgium

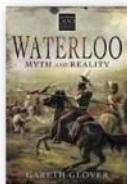
### BOOKS



#### THE WATERLOO COMPANION (2001)

By Mark Adkin

This thorough and well-illustrated study of the battle analyses the events, as well as recounting them.



#### WATERLOO: MYTH AND REALITY (2014)

By Gareth Glover

Glover delivers the most up-to-date account of the battle, with plenty of insight, separating the apocryphal from the factual along the way.

#### ALSO READ

- Waterloo: the History of Four Days, Three Armies and Three Battles by Bernard Cornwell
- Waterloo: The French Perspective by Andrew Field
- Dancing into Battle by Nicholas Foulkes

### ON SCREEN



#### WATERLOO (1970)

Starring Rod Steiger and Christopher Plummer – as well as 10,000 soldier extras – this film is reasonably realistic and certainly spectacular.

#### ALSO WATCH

- Sharpe's Waterloo (1997) Sean Bean plays the hero of Bernard Cornwell's novels.



# 1982 FALKLANDS RESCUE

Members of 1st Battalion Welsh Guards aboard lifeboats reach the shore at Fitzroy on 8 June, having escaped from the blazing RFA *Sir Galahad* during the Falklands War, fought between Britain and Argentina. An Argentine air raid devastated the ship, with 48 soldiers and crew killed in the resulting explosions and fires.

One of the survivors, Simon Weston, became well-known publicly after the war when he underwent years of reconstructive surgery from 46-per-cent burns. Weston was awarded the CBE in 2016 for his subsequent charity work.







# Rorke's Drift: Against all the odds

The defence of the mission station at **Rorke's Drift** during the Anglo-Zulu War remains one of the most celebrated incidents in British military history

**P**rince Dabulamanzi kaMpande was thirsty for action. He and most of the Zulu army's reserve had been spectators as their comrades had overwhelmed the British at Isandlwana, and he was determined that they shouldn't return to their kraals (enclosures) without having had the chance to wash their spears in the blood of the invading redcoats...

In the late 1870s, the British had decided to bring together their South African possessions, the independent Boer republics, and various local kingdoms into one single federation. They believed that in order to implement this policy, they needed to neutralise Zululand – a successful (and, in British eyes, dangerous) warrior kingdom on the border of Natal.

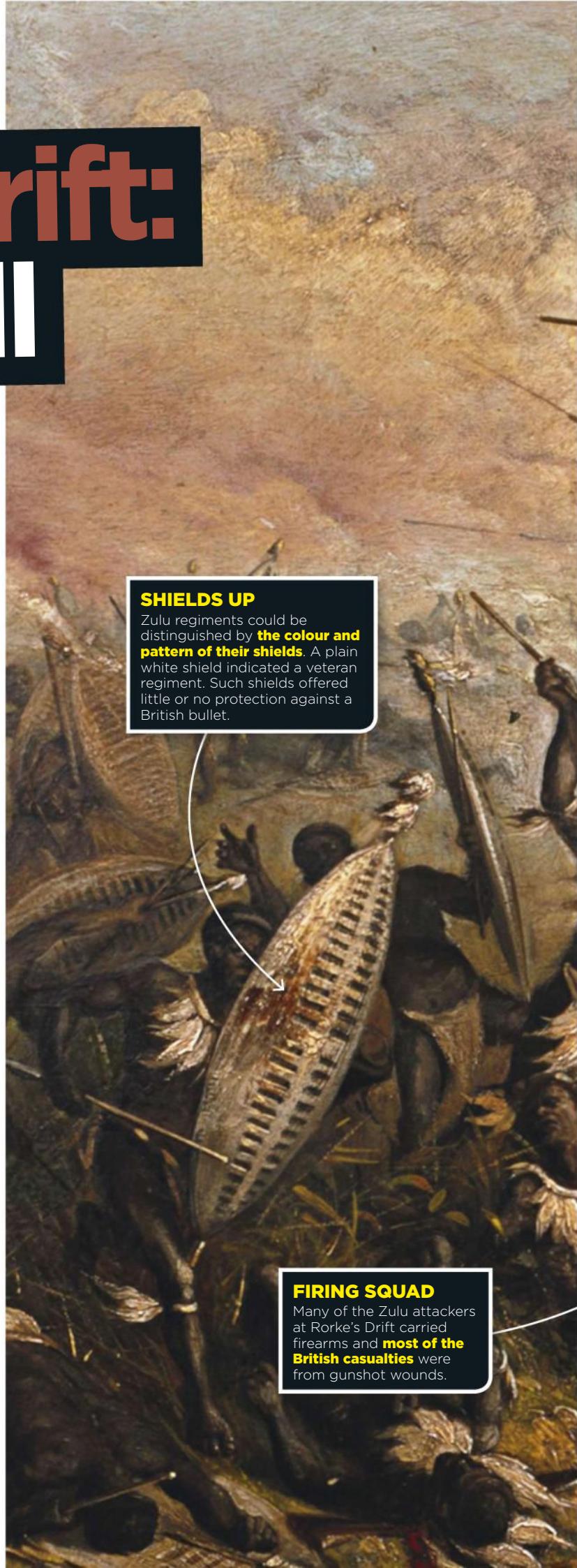
Cetshwayo, King of Zululand, had no interest in co-operating with British plans, so Sir Bartle Frere, the British High Commissioner, decided to pick a fight with him. Seizing on a number of border incidents, he handed Cetshwayo a list of demands that he knew the Zulu King would never accept – including a call for the disbandment of the Zulu army

– giving him 30 days to comply. On 11 January 1879, after Cetshwayo had failed to respond, the British invaded his kingdom.

The invasion force, under the command of Lieutenant-General Lord Chelmsford, was split into three columns. Chelmsford himself accompanied the central column, which crossed the Buffalo River at Rorke's Drift Mission Station. After depositing supplies there and detaching a company of the 24th Regiment, plus some native troops to guard them, Chelmsford's column pushed on into Zululand in search of Cetshwayo's army. Frank Bourne, the Colour Sergeant of the company stationed at Rorke's Drift, was bitterly disappointed to be ordered to stay behind. But that order was to save his life.

## STRUNG OUT

Underestimating both the Zulus' fighting ability and their speed of movement, Chelmsford divided his column. On 22 January, the main Zulu army surprised his camp at Isandlwana. The camp hadn't been properly prepared to resist an attack, and the 1,700 troops defending it were dangerously strung out. The British took a terrible toll of the Zulus with their



### SHIELDS UP

Zulu regiments could be distinguished by **the colour and pattern of their shields**. A plain white shield indicated a veteran regiment. Such shields offered little or no protection against a British bullet.

### FIRING SQUAD

Many of the Zulu attackers at Rorke's Drift carried firearms and **most of the British casualties** were from gunshot wounds.

## IN A TIGHT SPOT

A 19th-century impression of the fighting at Rorke's Drift

### BRITISH TROOPS

Although the film *Zulu* gives the impression that the garrison at **Rorke's Drift** was predominantly **Welsh**, less than a third of the defenders would have considered themselves Welshmen. More of the defenders **were in fact English**.

### BEYOND THE BARRICADE

Improvised barricades of **biscuit boxes** and **mealie bags** were a vital factor in the successful defence of Rorke's Drift.

### BATTLE CONTEXT

#### Who

**BRITISH:** c150 (including sick) under Lieutenants Chard and Bromhead

**ZULUS:** 4,000 under Prince Dabulamanzi

#### When

22-23 January 1879

#### Where

Natal, South Africa

#### Why

Following victory at Isandlwana earlier, part of the Zulu army attacked the British hospital and depot at Rorke's Drift

#### Outcome

British victory. The British lost 17 killed, 15 wounded. Around 1,000 Zulus were killed or wounded



## RORKE'S DRIFT, 1879

# “Fugitives warned the garrison that the Zulus were on their way”

◀ Martini-Henry rifles, but were eventually overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers. The majority of the defenders, including nearly all the British troops, were killed.

Cetshwayo had ordered his troops not to cross the Buffalo River into Natal – he wanted to fight a defensive war to show he was not the aggressor. But he had reckoned without his half-brother, Prince Dabulamanzi kaMpande, who was in command of the largely unused Zulu army reserve. Determined not to miss out on the action, Dabulamanzi ignored Cetshwayo's orders and led up to 4,000 warriors in what he thought would be a lightning raid across the border. The mission station at Rorke's Drift stood squarely in their path.

### NO CONCERN

The Rorke's Drift garrison consisted of 'B' Company, 2nd Battalion, 24th (2nd Warwickshire) Regiment, under Lieutenant Gonville Bromhead, plus a contingent of native troops and some Royal Engineers, commanded by the senior officer on the day, Lieutenant

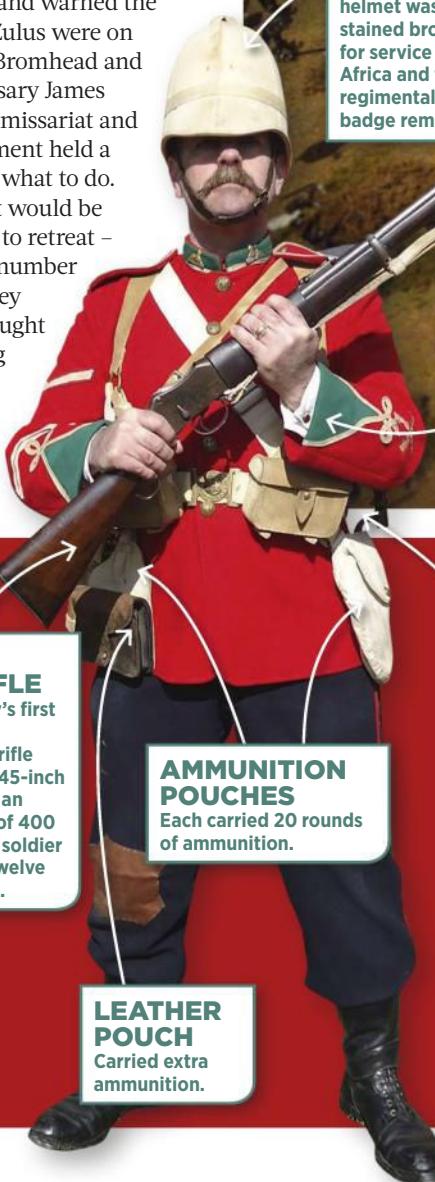
John Chard. At about 1pm they heard distant firing, but weren't particularly concerned.

Private Fred Hitch, who would later be awarded a Victoria Cross for his actions recalled: "We did not expect any fighting that day, and were occupied in our usual duties, little thinking that a horde of Zulus – the pick of the Zulu Army, in fact – were marching on us, determined to kill every man at our little post." However,

fugitives from Isandlwana soon brought news of the catastrophe there and warned the garrison that the Zulus were on their way. Chard, Bromhead and Assistant Commissary James Dalton of the Commissariat and Transport Department held a meeting to decide what to do. They agreed that it would be suicide to attempt to retreat – encumbered by a number of sick soldiers, they would easily be caught by the fast-moving Zulus – and chose to stand and fight. Soon the garrison was

900

Rounds of ammo the defenders had left by the morning, having fired 20,000.



#### MARTINI-HENRY RIFLE

The British army's first purpose-built breach-loading rifle fired a heavy, 0.45-inch calibre bullet to an effective range of 400 yards. A trained soldier could manage twelve rounds a minute.

#### AMMUNITION POUCHES

Each carried 20 rounds of ammunition.

#### LEATHER POUCH

Carried extra ammunition.

#### BAYONET

Nicknamed 'the lunger', this triangular steel-socket bayonet allowed the rifle to be fired when it was fitted.

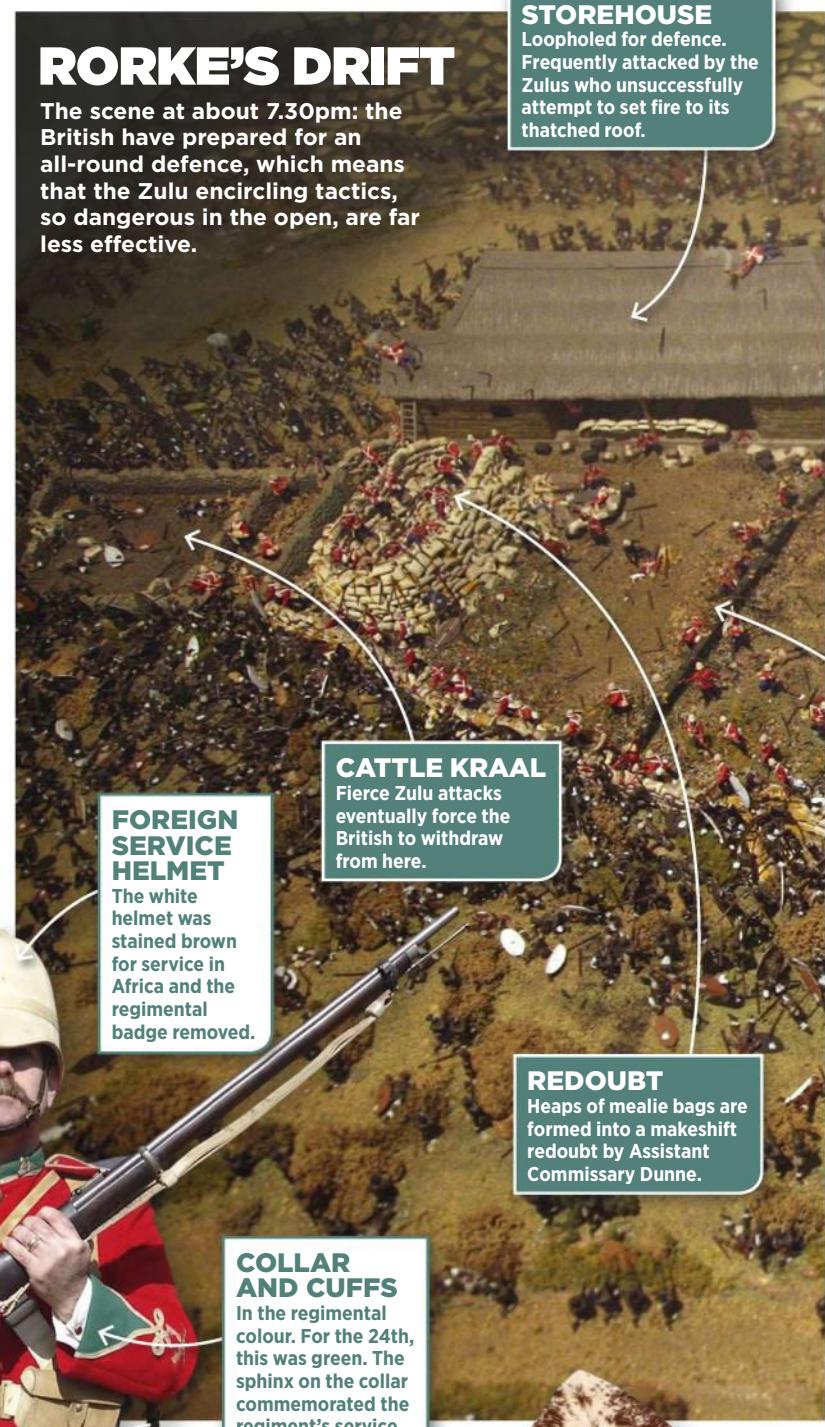
#### ISIHALANGU

Large five-foot shield carried in battle. The property of the Zulu king, they were made of hardened cow-hide. The pattern and colour denoted the ibutho (regiment) of the bearer. At Rorke's Drift, many warriors carried a smaller shield called an umbubuluzo.

## RORKE'S DRIFT

The scene at about 7.30pm: the British have prepared for an all-round defence, which means that the Zulu encircling tactics, so dangerous in the open, are far less effective.

**STOREHOUSE**  
Loopholed for defence. Frequently attacked by the Zulus who unsuccessfully attempt to set fire to its thatched roof.



#### FOREIGN SERVICE HELMET

The white helmet was stained brown for service in Africa and the regimental badge removed.

#### CATTLE KRAAL

Fierce Zulu attacks eventually force the British to withdraw from here.

#### REDoubt

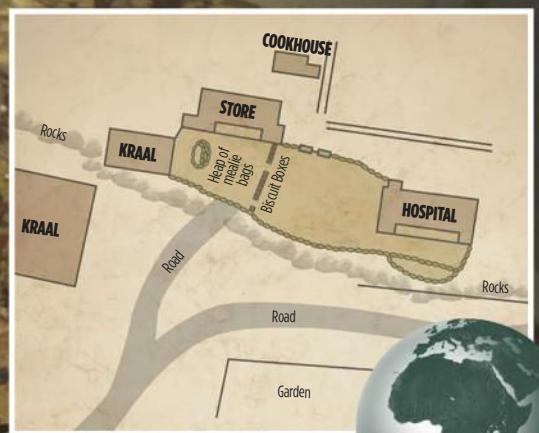
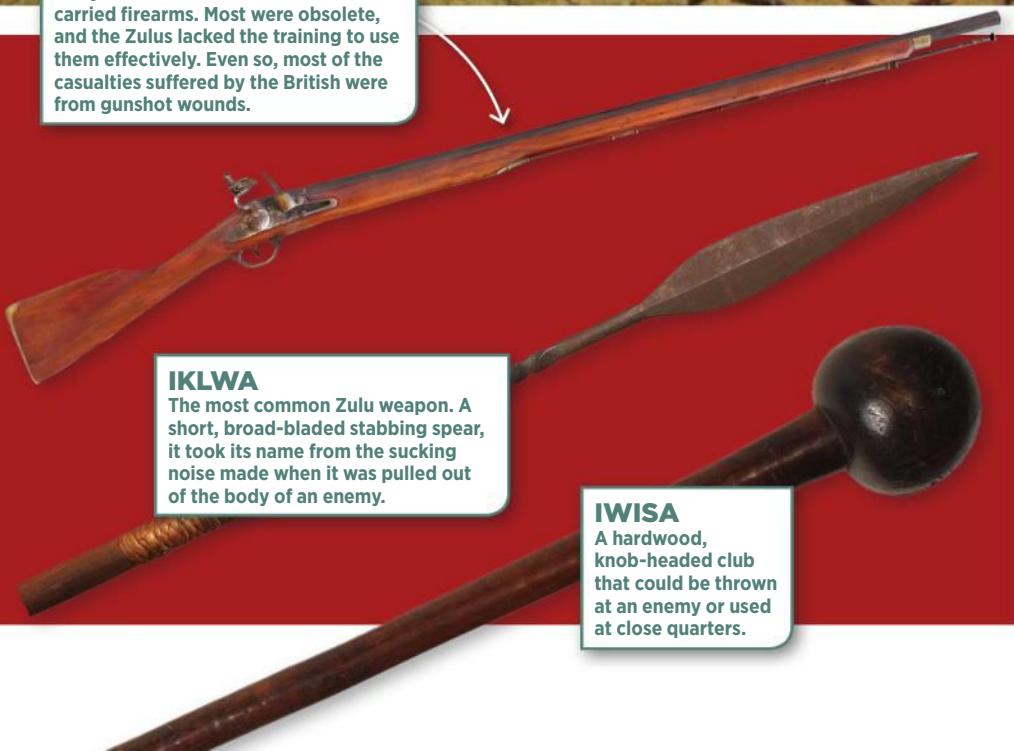
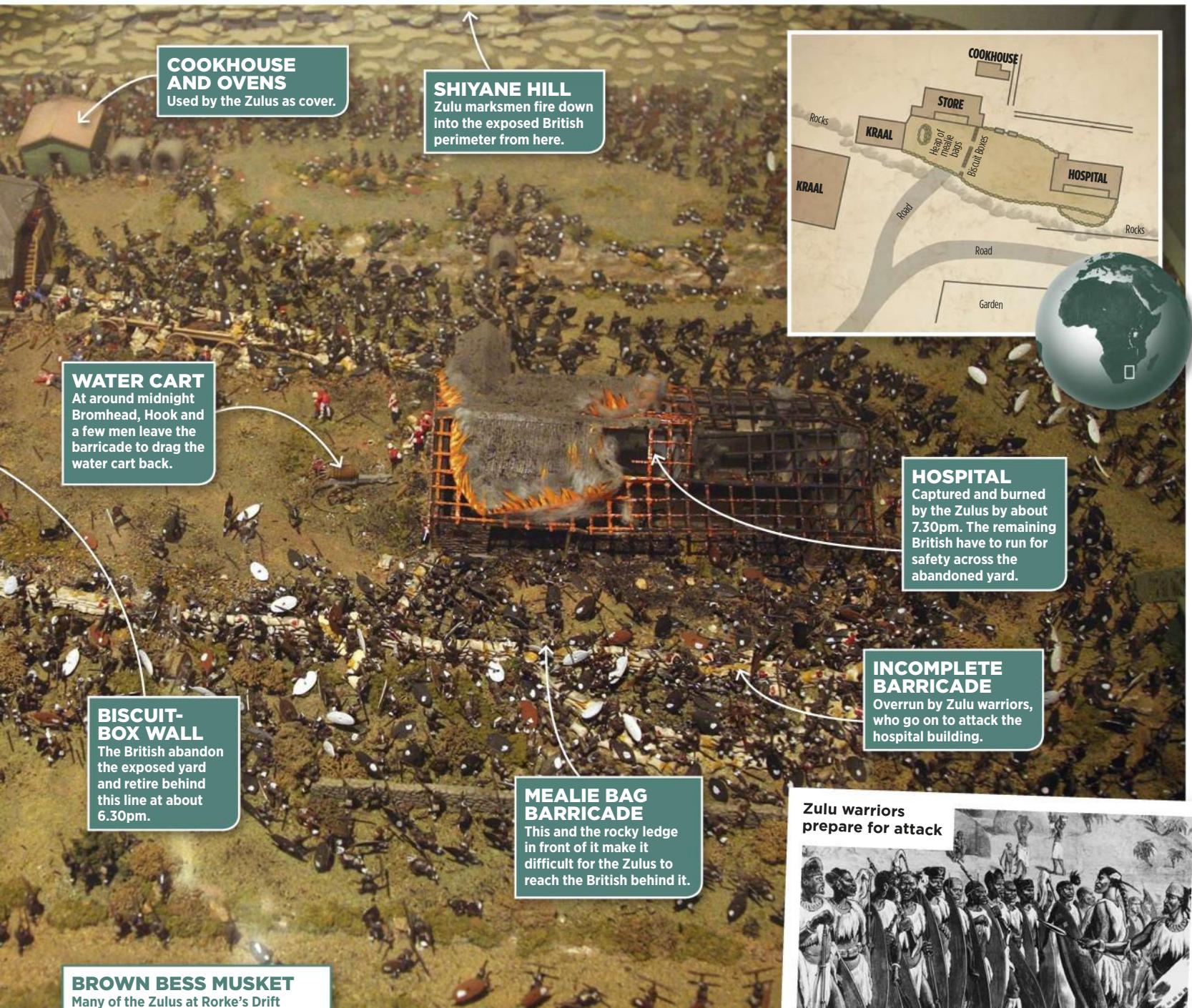
Heaps of mealie bags are formed into a makeshift redoubt by Assistant Commissary Dunne.

#### COLLAR AND CUFFS

In the regimental colour. For the 24th, this was green. The sphinx on the collar commemorated the regiment's service in Egypt.

## CONTRASTING STYLES

The Zulu War was a clash of contrasting armies and fighting styles. The British army was a professional force, made up of volunteers. While it also deployed cavalry and field artillery, it primarily relied upon the firepower of its infantry on the battlefield. Conversely, the Zulu army was a conscripted citizen force. The Zulus sought to close with their enemies, envelop their flanks and defeat them in their speciality, which was hand-to-hand combat.



## A SOCIETY GEARED FOR WAR

The Zulus were some of the most formidable foes faced by the British army in its colonial campaigns. All Zulu men were liable for military service and served in an *ibutho*, or regiment, with men of the same age from all across the country. When the men married they passed into a reserve and were only called upon in national emergencies.

The King's permission was needed before men could get married and, in order to retain their military services, the King would frequently make them wait until they were 40 before he would grant it.

hard at work, cutting defensive loopholes in the walls of the buildings and improvising barricades from bags of maize and boxes of biscuits. A party of Natal Native Horse who had survived Isandlwana were deployed to delay the enemy advance but, as the Zulus came into sight, they broke and fled. Panic spread to the native infantry within the defences and they too made themselves scarce, reducing the garrison to around 150 men.

At about 4.30pm, the Zulus made their first attack as 600 men of the iNdluyengwe regiment rushed forward into a hail of fire. Lieutenant Chard described their bravery: "We opened fire on them, between five and six hundred yards... The men were quite steady, and the Zulus began to fall very thick. However, it did not seem to stop them at all, although they took advantage of the cover and

ran stooping with their faces very close to the ground. It seemed that nothing would stop them, and they rushed on in spite of their heavy loss to within 50 yards of the wall."

The weight of fire was so great that the attackers could get no closer and they veered round to attack the front of the hospital. By now, the main Zulu force had arrived and, for the next five hours, launched a succession of attacks, notably against the hospital.

They also attacked the barricades, but their spears were unable to reach the men behind them. Many Zulus were shot at close range, and those who did manage to climb the barricades were quickly bayoneted. In fact, the main worry the defenders had was bullets. Zulu riflemen had climbed the Shiyane Hill to the south of the station, and from there they opened a heavy fire down into the yard below.

## "Six hundred men rushed forward into a hail of fire"

11  
The number of Victoria Crosses awarded to the defenders of Rorke's Drift



## THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

The Battle of Rorke's Drift turned into a useful PR exercise

Rorke's Drift was a godsend to the British establishment. Although it had no effect on the war as a whole, it gave them a victory to distract attention from the defeat at

Isandlwana. Chelmsford's invasion ground to a temporary halt but the Zulus had paid a terrible price for that success: hundreds of their warriors had been killed and wounded in a day. Chelmsford

## POCKET DYNAMO

One of the most enduring characters in Cy Endfield's film *Zulu* is Colour Sergeant Frank Bourne, memorably played by the late Nigel Green. His Bourne was a tall, imposing veteran in early middle age who was a father figure to the men in his company. In fact, Bourne was just 5'6" tall and was nicknamed 'the kid' because he was the youngest Colour Sergeant in the British army. Bourne was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal after the battle and offered a commission (which he initially turned down on financial grounds). The last surviving defender of Rorke's Drift, he died aged 91 on VE Day, 8 May 1945.



### BOURNE IDENTITY

The bearded sergeant of the film was really just 24 years old

Fortunately for the defenders, the Zulus were poor shots and many of their firearms were antiquated. Even so, a number of soldiers were killed and wounded, forcing Chard to order his men to abandon the yard and pull back behind a barricade of biscuit boxes.

At around the same time, the Zulus redoubled their efforts to storm the hospital. Setting fire to its thatched roof, they finally burst in. A desperate struggle took place in its smoke-filled rooms as a few soldiers fought the Zulus off with their long bayonets, and hacked holes in the partition walls so that the surviving patients could be dragged out into the barricaded yard and carried to safety.

By now, it was getting dark and the British had withdrawn to a narrow perimeter in front of the storehouse, where a

redoubt had been built out of maize bags for a final stand. The hospital blazed brightly, but this worked to the defenders' advantage as it denied the Zulus the cover of darkness. Finally, at about 10pm, the Zulu attacks began to slacken, although shooting continued until just before dawn. First light revealed a scene of utter devastation. Dead and dying warriors lay in heaps – at least 400 were counted – but to the defenders' relief the Zulus had withdrawn.

At around 7am, a large body of Zulus appeared south-east of the station, forcing the exhausted redcoats to stand-to once again, but they soon moved off. The reason for this soon became clear: Lord Chelmsford was arriving with the remains of his central column. Despite the overwhelming odds, Rorke's Drift had survived. ☀

### GET HOOKED!

Find out more about the battle and those involved

### VISIT THE BATTLEFIELD

A visit to Rorke's Drift has to be on the bucket list of anyone with an interest in the Zulu War. There's the Shiyane Museum with displays on the battle. [www.heritagekzn.co.za](http://www.heritagekzn.co.za) Or you can head to the nearby Fugitives Drift lodge – a beautiful base from which to explore the battlefield. [www.fugitivesdrift.com](http://www.fugitivesdrift.com)



Should the defence of Rorke's Drift be celebrated today?

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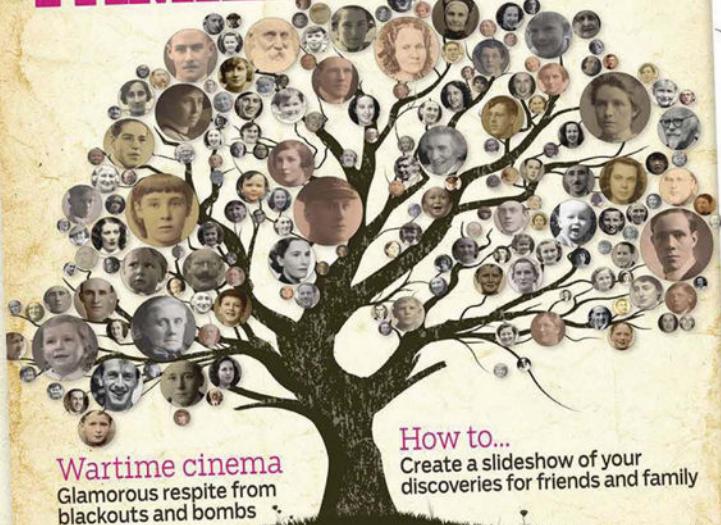
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# Death of the old British Army

How the professional British Army beat back the Germans at **Ypres** in **World War I** – and was all but destroyed in the process

**S**eptember 1914 saw German forces advancing through northern France, having already marched through Belgium. They had been counter-attacked and driven back at the River Marne. In October, following an unsuccessful attempt to break through on the River Aisne, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) began to concentrate around the Belgian town of Ypres, which was closer to Britain and therefore easier to supply. Believing that a breakthrough at Ypres would allow their troops to advance rapidly across the flat terrain of Flanders, the British and French began pushing eastwards.

But the Germans had ideas of their own. Unknown to the Allies, they had also been concentrating forces in the area and in mid-October they launched a massive attempt to break through at Ypres and capture the key Channel ports of Calais and Boulogne.

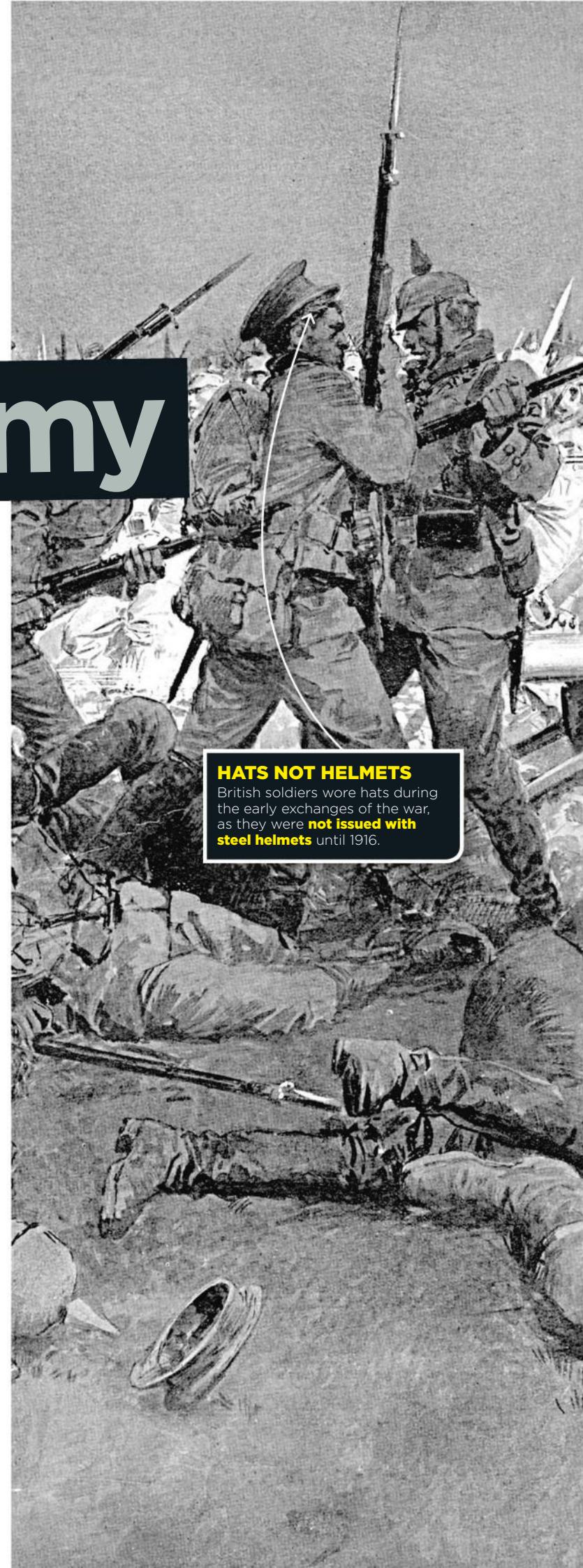
The battle that followed is often portrayed as a struggle between the British and the Germans, but that's only part of the story. French and Belgian forces were also heavily involved in the wider battle.

Indeed, the Belgians, holding most of the line north of Ypres, initially bore the brunt of the German offensive. They only stopped the Germans by opening the sluice gates of the area's drainage canals, causing widespread flooding and rendering much of their front-line completely impassable.

## TAKE COVER

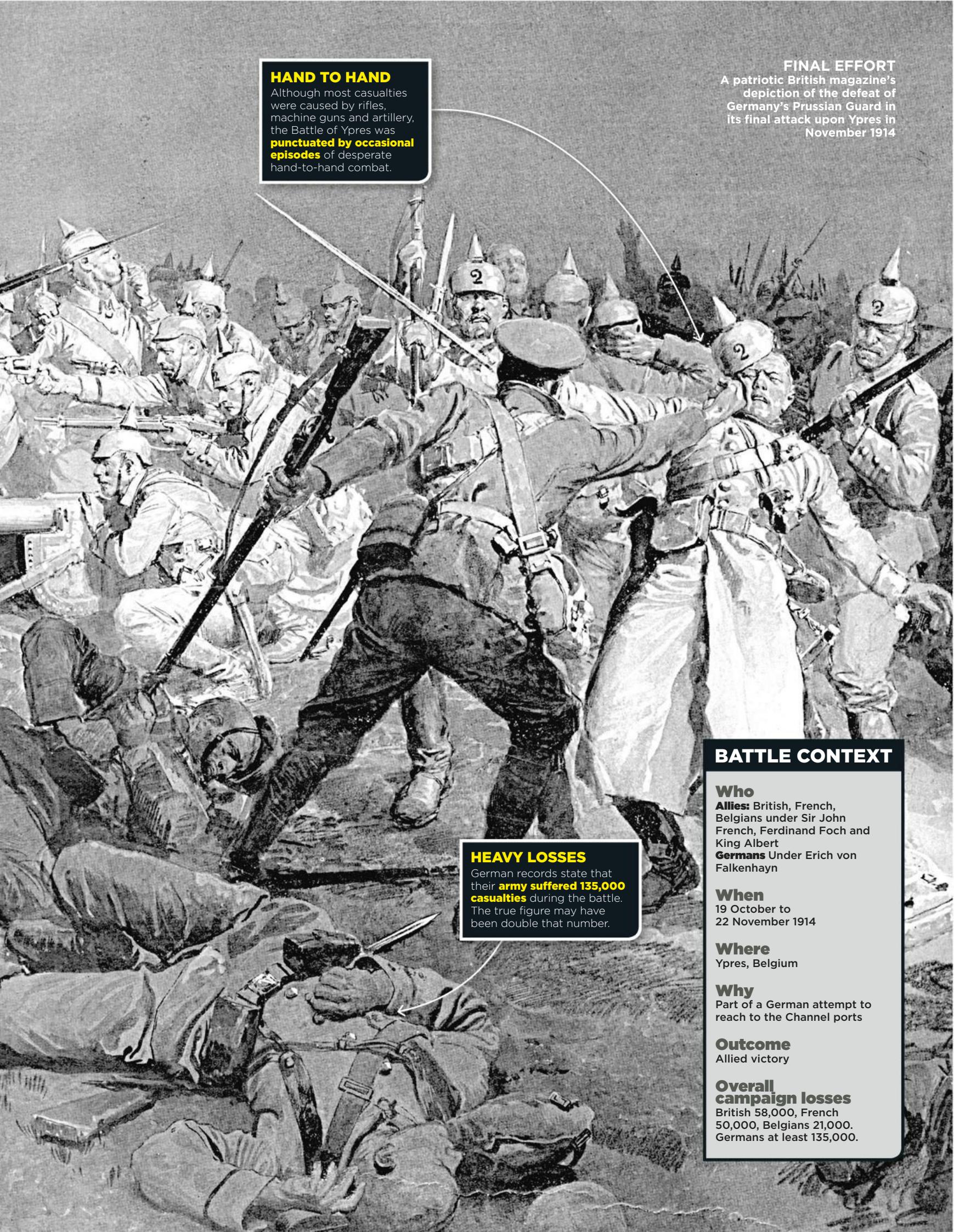
Soon, German eyes were fixed on Ypres itself. On 19 October, the Germans made their first attacks on the town and it quickly became clear that they enjoyed a huge superiority both in numbers and artillery. Any thoughts the British had of advancing eastwards were soon abandoned. At this stage of the war, there were no bunkers, no complex trench systems and no barbed wire. As shells rained down on them, the British soldiers had to use what cover they could find – ditches, walls, woods – or pile up sandbags and scrape shallow trenches in the sodden ground. Confident of success and buoyed by a patriotic fervour, the Germans pressed forward around Langemark.

But the old sweats of the BEF were ready for them. As the dense columns of eager Germans came into range, they were shot to pieces >



### HATS NOT HELMETS

British soldiers wore hats during the early exchanges of the war, as they were **not issued with steel helmets** until 1916.



### HAND TO HAND

Although most casualties were caused by rifles, machine guns and artillery, the Battle of Ypres was punctuated by occasional episodes of desperate hand-to-hand combat.

### FINAL EFFORT

A patriotic British magazine's depiction of the defeat of Germany's Prussian Guard in its final attack upon Ypres in November 1914

### HEAVY LOSSES

German records state that their army suffered 135,000 casualties during the battle. The true figure may have been double that number.

### BATTLE CONTEXT

#### Who

**Allies:** British, French, Belgians under Sir John French, Ferdinand Foch and King Albert  
**Germans:** Under Erich von Falkenhayn

#### When

19 October to 22 November 1914

#### Where

Ypres, Belgium

#### Why

Part of a German attempt to reach to the Channel ports

#### Outcome

Allied victory

#### Overall campaign losses

British 58,000, French 50,000, Belgians 21,000. Germans at least 135,000.

# OPPOSING SIDES

The well-trained riflemen of the professional British army outshot their German opponents. Thousands of Germans were cut down as they advanced in the open.

**FIELD SERVICE CAP**  
With regimental badge. British soldiers were not issued with steel helmets until 1916.

## BRITISH SOLDIER

**SERVICE DRESS TUNIC**  
Made of wool serge dyed khaki for camouflage. Khaki comes from an Urdu word meaning dusty.

**SWORD BAYONET**  
Its extra length was to compensate for the relative shortness of the rifle, and ensure the user wasn't outreached in a bayonet fight.

**SHORT-MAGAZINE LEE-ENFIELD RIFLE**  
Bolt-action rifle firing a .303in calibre round to an effective range of 500 metres, with a ten-round magazine holding two charges of five cartridges. A well-trained soldier could fire at least 15 rounds a minute.

**PUTTEES**  
Long wool serge strips wound round the lower leg to provide support and protection, and to prevent stones and dirt from getting into the boot. The name comes from the Hindi word for bandage.

## GERMAN SOLDIER

**PICKELHAUBE**  
Spiked leather helmet with cloth cover. The spike proved conspicuous and unwieldy and was later removed.

**FELDBLUSE**  
Field jacket made of 'Feldgrau' (grey-green) wool.

**GEWEHR 98**  
1898 pattern Mauser bolt-action rifle (gewehr) firing a 7.92mm round to an effective range of 500m. A reliable weapon but the fact that the magazine only held five rounds slowed down the rate of fire.

**PATRONENTASCHEN**  
Each of the six brown leather cartridge pouches holds three five-round clips of 7.92mm cartridges, giving a total of 90 rounds.

**MARSCHSTIEFEL**  
Hobnailed marching boots in natural brown leather. Nicknamed 'Knobelbecher', or 'dice shakers'.



# “The Germans thought they were being fired on by machine guns”

by the rapid and well-aimed rifle fire of the professional British infantry, who prided themselves on their marksmanship. It was a similar story south of Ypres, where the dismounted troopers of the British cavalry also demonstrated their skills in what the BEF still called ‘musketry’. British rifle fire was so destructive that some writers have claimed that the Germans actually thought they were being fired on by machine guns.

Despite their appalling losses, the Germans continued to attack. Though pushed back in places, the British line held – just. But the BEF’s losses were mounting as well, especially from the shells of the German artillery. Much-needed reinforcements arrived in the shape of troops from the Indian army, who fought well despite being woefully ill-equipped for the rigours of a Belgian winter. By now, though, French’s forces were becoming badly stretched.

On 29 October, the Germans tried again, heading straight for Ypres along the Menin Road.

**15**  
Aimed rounds per minute fired by a trained British rifleman in 1914

The outnumbered British fought desperately but this time musketry was not enough. Sheer weight of numbers eventually told and, two days later, the Germans seized the important village of Gheluvelt, punching a gaping hole in the

British line. Matters got worse when a number of British generals and staff officers were killed and wounded when their headquarters – the chateau at Hooge – was shelled. The British position was

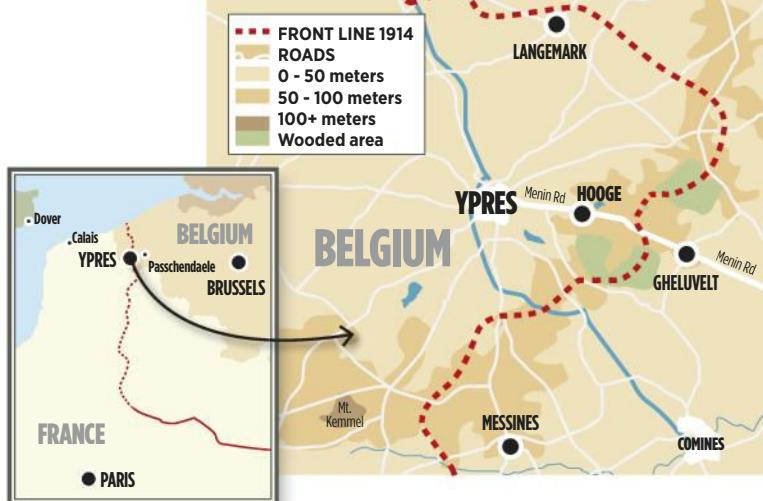
fast unravelling. The road to Ypres was open and the BEF had no units in the area to plug the gap – except for one.

On the morning of the 31 October, the 2nd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment was resting on the edge of Polygon Wood, about a mile and a half north-west of Gheluvelt. They had been in action for 10 days, had already been reduced to less than 500 men and were tired, unshaven and unwashed. But their weapons were clean and they were ready for a fight. Around noon they

&gt;

## A SALIENT POINT

Ypres Salient: a salient is a battlefield that projects into enemy territory



## THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS?

Four miles north of Ypres stands the sombre German cemetery of Langemark. Over 44,000 German dead are buried here, including 3,000 student volunteers. In October 1914, the area was the scene of terrible slaughter as thousands of German soldiers from the newly-raised German Fourth Army were mown down by British riflemen and their French allies. These events entered German folklore as the ‘massacre of the innocents’, with untrained student volunteers marching, arms-linked, to their deaths singing patriotic songs. In fact, many of the Germans who attacked at Langemark were experienced reservists. Of the rest, only a minority were students.

## WEAPONS AND WARRIOR

A mixture of serving soldiers and reservists who had returned to the colours, the small British army that marched to war in 1914 was perhaps the best-trained ever to leave these shores. It was a professional army and had learned much from the harsh lessons taught to it by the Boers at the turn of the century. The German army that opposed it at Ypres was essentially a conscript force. Many were reservists although some were enthusiastic young volunteers with only rudimentary military training.



**MG08**

The standard German army machine gun of World War I had a rate of fire of up to 500 rounds a minute, an effective range of 2,000 metres and was cooled by a water-filled jacket around the barrel.

**FIELD DRESSING**  
Issued to all soldiers and kept in a pocket under the front flap of the service dress tunic. Consisted of two dressings – one for an entry wound and one for the exit.



### ‘PIP, SQUEAK AND WILFRED’

The 1914 Star (awarded to those who had served in France or Belgium between 5 August and 22 November 1914), British War Medal and the Allied Victory Medal, nicknamed ‘Pip, Squeak and Wilfred’ after a comic strip in the *Daily Mirror*.



### CHARGER OF 5 BRITISH MARK VII BULLETS

Could be quickly pushed into a rifle’s magazine.

**BRITISH IDENTITY DISC**  
Carried the wearer’s name, number and religion to help identify dead soldiers.





## YPRES, 1914

### FORWARD MARCH

Scots Guards rest by the roadside during their march to the front, October 1914



## BUSSED IN

Members of the 2nd Royal Warwickshire Regiment arrive in Ypres



## MARTYRED TOWN

The Belgian town of Ypres lies on a low, wet plain – a natural amphitheatre overlooked by higher ground to the north, east and south. German shelling of Ypres began during the first battle and by 1918 the entire town had been reduced to rubble – only the shattered remains of the Cloth Hall clock tower stood above shoulder height. After the war there was a proposal to preserve the ruins of the town as a memorial, but eventually Ypres was fully rebuilt and it now looks very much like it did before the outbreak of war.



### REDUCED TO RUINS

By 1918, the ancient town of Ypres was little more than a heap of rubble

## “Shells were bursting everywhere, the ground was strewn with bodies”

received the order to counter-attack. Sending one company to block the road to Ypres, the rest, just 370 men, fixed their long bayonets and headed for Gheluvelt, guided by the spire of its church, which could be seen rising through the smoke.

Arriving at Gheluvelt, the Worcesters emerged onto the open ground in front of the burning village. Shells were bursting everywhere and the ground was strewn with bodies. Realising that a steady advance under such heavy fire would be suicidal, Major Hankey, who was in command of the battalion, gave the order to advance at the double. Led by their officers, the British rushed down a slope, splashed through a small beck and then charged up the slope on the far side, before scrambling

over a railway line into Gheluvelt. More than 100 men fell before they got there but the rest burst into the grounds of Gheluvelt Chateau, catching the disorganised Germans by surprise. Many of the Germans were young inexperienced soldiers, and those who weren't shot, bayoneted or captured rapidly made themselves scarce.

The Worcesters had a surprise of their own when they discovered that part of the reason for the German disorganisation was that remnants of another British regiment, the South Wales Borderers, were still defending the chateau. The chateau and the grounds around it had been secured, but there was still work to be done, for a few German troops

remained in Gheluvelt village itself. The Worcesters could have been forgiven for thinking that they had done enough, but they returned to the attack and fought their way through the burning houses of Gheluvelt until they reached the crossroads at the eastern end of the village. By the end of the day, a third of the battalion had been killed or wounded, but the gap in the British line had been plugged.

### FINAL PUSH

German attention now shifted south. After a tremendous struggle, they succeeded in capturing Messines Ridge, an important stretch of high ground south of Ypres. However, with the help of French troops, their assault was brought to a halt.

Then, on 11 November, the Germans made a final push on Ypres. After a massive artillery bombardment, they once again attacked along the Menin Road. This time however, the assault was led by the elite troops of the Prussian Guard. In some places, the battered British regiments were forced to retreat but, blasted by artillery and under concentrated rifle fire, the Germans gradually ran out of steam. On 17 November, the Germans were ordered to start digging in and

five days later the fighting petered out. Although the high ground around the Ypres Salient was now in German hands, the town itself remained unconquered.

But the BEF had paid a terrible price for its victory. Some regiments were now no larger than companies and one had only 35 men left. The losses at Ypres, combined with those in the previous months, meant that the old professional BEF had been virtually wiped out. ◎

## AFTERMATH

Their failure to break through at Ypres dashed German hopes of a quick victory and left the Allies in possession of a salient, which jutted out into the German lines. Ypres' importance was symbolic as well as military – it was in the last corner of Belgium not overrun by the Germans. In spring 1915, the Germans attacked again, this time using

poison gas. Again they failed to take the town.

In 1917, it was the British who attacked. They quickly captured Messines Ridge but became bogged down in the mud before Passchendaele.

Finally, in 1918, the Germans' spring offensive brought them within touching distance of the town before their attacks ran out of steam.

**500,000**

Estimated British and Commonwealth casualties at Ypres 1914-18

### GET HOOKED!

Find out more about the battle and those involved

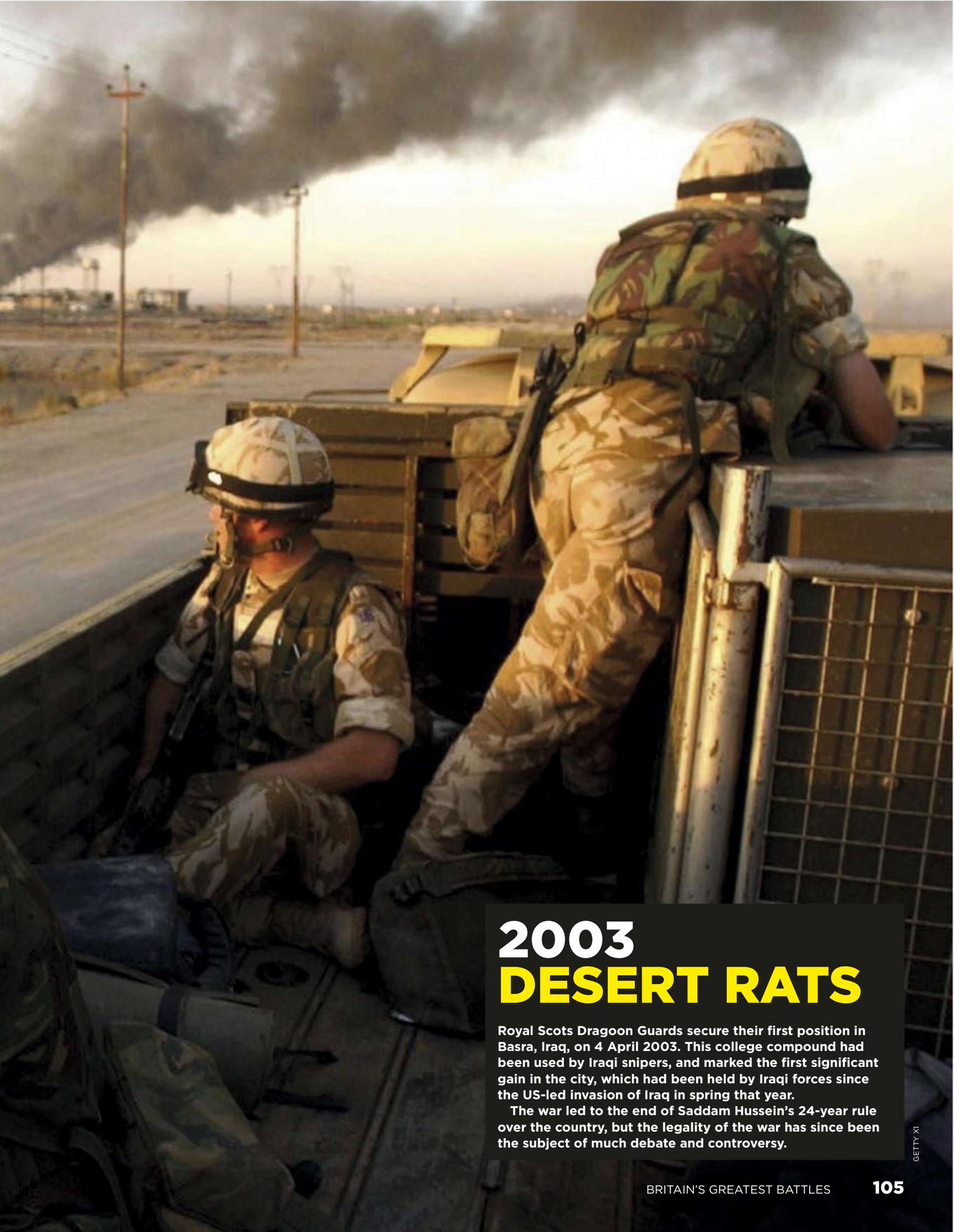
### VISIT THE BATTLEFIELD

The area is well worth a visit as much of the countryside in the Ypres Salient looks very much like it did in 1914. The In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres Cloth Hall offers an introduction to the fighting, while the moving last-post ceremony at the Menin Gate Memorial (daily at 8.00pm) should certainly not be missed.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

Was the British victory at Ypres worth the cost to the army?  
email: editor@historyrevealed.com





## 2003 DESERT RATS

Royal Scots Dragoon Guards secure their first position in Basra, Iraq, on 4 April 2003. This college compound had been used by Iraqi snipers, and marked the first significant gain in the city, which had been held by Iraqi forces since the US-led invasion of Iraq in spring that year.

The war led to the end of Saddam Hussein's 24-year rule over the country, but the legality of the war has since been the subject of much debate and controversy.



## BATTLE OF BRITAIN

### ACE IN A DAY

On just one day in August 1940, Sergeant Hamlyn shot down **five enemy aircraft** on three separate missions. The phenomenal feat earned him ace-in-a-day status, along with a **Distinguished Flying Medal**.

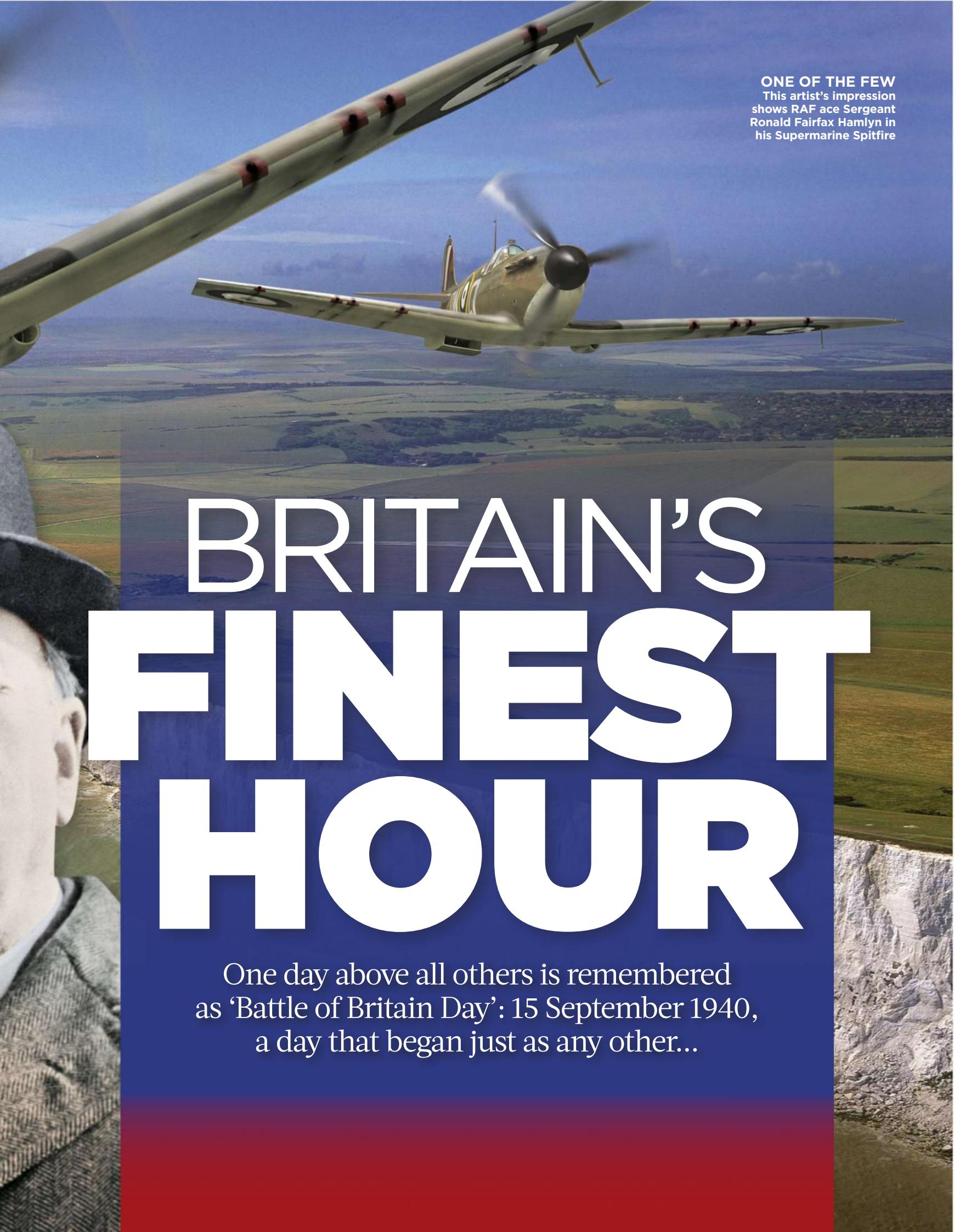
### BOMBER COMMAND

While Fighter Command was getting the glory, **British bombers** launched **costly offensives** in Europe, including attacks on the Nazi invasion barges, which were gathering at Boulogne, France.

ALAMY X1, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS X1, GARY EASON X1, GETTY X1

“NEVER IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN CONFLICT, WAS SO MUCH OWED, BY SO MANY, TO SO FEW.”

WINSTON CHURCHILL 20 AUGUST 1940



**ONE OF THE FEW**  
This artist's impression  
shows RAF ace Sergeant  
Ronald Fairfax Hamlyn in  
his Supermarine Spitfire

# BRITAIN'S FINEST HOUR

One day above all others is remembered  
as 'Battle of Britain Day': 15 September 1940,  
a day that began just as any other...



## BATTLE OF BRITAIN

**S**eptember the 15th didn't start well for Keith Park. Such were the strains of command that the New Zealand-born commander of the RAF's No 11 Fighter Group had completely forgotten it was his wife's birthday. Fortunately, Mrs Park was of a forgiving disposition and, having promised to give her a bag of German aircraft as a birthday present, he departed for work.

'Work' for Air Vice-Marshal Park was an underground control room at RAF Uxbridge, and it was from here that he supervised and co-ordinated the fighter defence of London and the South East against German air attacks. Mid-morning he received alarming news – the Prime Minister had decided to drop in to see how things were going. Churchill duly arrived and Park was faced with his first tricky decision

their machine guns. If everything worked and the plane was deemed ready for action, its petrol tank would then be filled with 85 gallons of high-octane fuel. The arriving pilots would take turns to grab some breakfast, either in huts near the planes or sitting in deckchairs outside a tent. Either way, the key thing was to be within sprinting distance of their aircraft.

Across the Channel things were stirring. At about 10:10, a force of around 30 German Dornier bombers took off from their bases near Beauvais, north of Paris, and flew up to Cap Gris Nez, where they were due to rendezvous with several units of fighters before making for London. The fighters took off as planned at 11:00 but valuable time (and fuel) was wasted as the groups of planes searched for each other in the clouds before crossing the Channel. All the while, this activity was being picked up by

## "THIRTY GERMAN BOMBERS TOOK OFF AND FLEW NORTH TO RENDEZVOUS WITH FIGHTERS BEFORE MAKING FOR LONDON"

of the day – how did one go about politely telling Britain's leader that the control room air-conditioning couldn't cope with cigar smoke?

Meanwhile, at airfields across southern England, fighter pilots were awaiting the call to action. Most pilots awoke at dawn (to a cup of tea if they were officers) and waited for the lorry that would drive them out to the dispersal areas near their planes. While this was happening, ground crews would be hard at work on the planes, checking repairs, testing their engines and loading

British radar. Back at Uxbridge, and watched by Churchill, a WAAF put the first of what would be many markers on the control room map, while Park gave the order for the first two of his squadrons to scramble.

Over at Biggin Hill, the pilots of 92 Squadron were relaxing around the stove in their dispersal hut when the words "Scramble, scramble" blared out from the tannoy. As the pilots grabbed their parachutes and sprinted towards their Spitfires, members of the ground crew pressed the starter buttons on battery carts

**544**

The number of Fighter Command pilots killed in the Battle. The Luftwaffe lost 2,500 air crew



### BIRD OF PREY

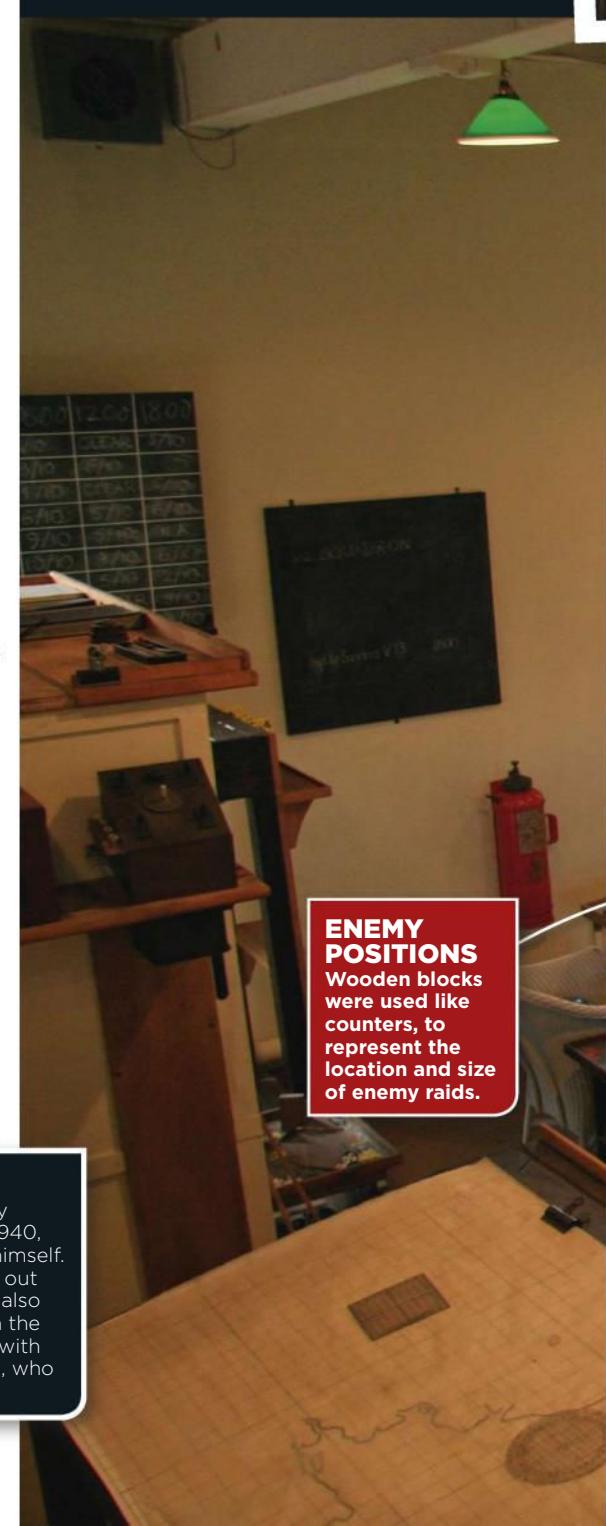
An artist's impression shows Harold 'Birdy' Bird-Wilson shooting down a Luftwaffe Me BF 109 from his Hurricane

### TWICE AS LUCKY

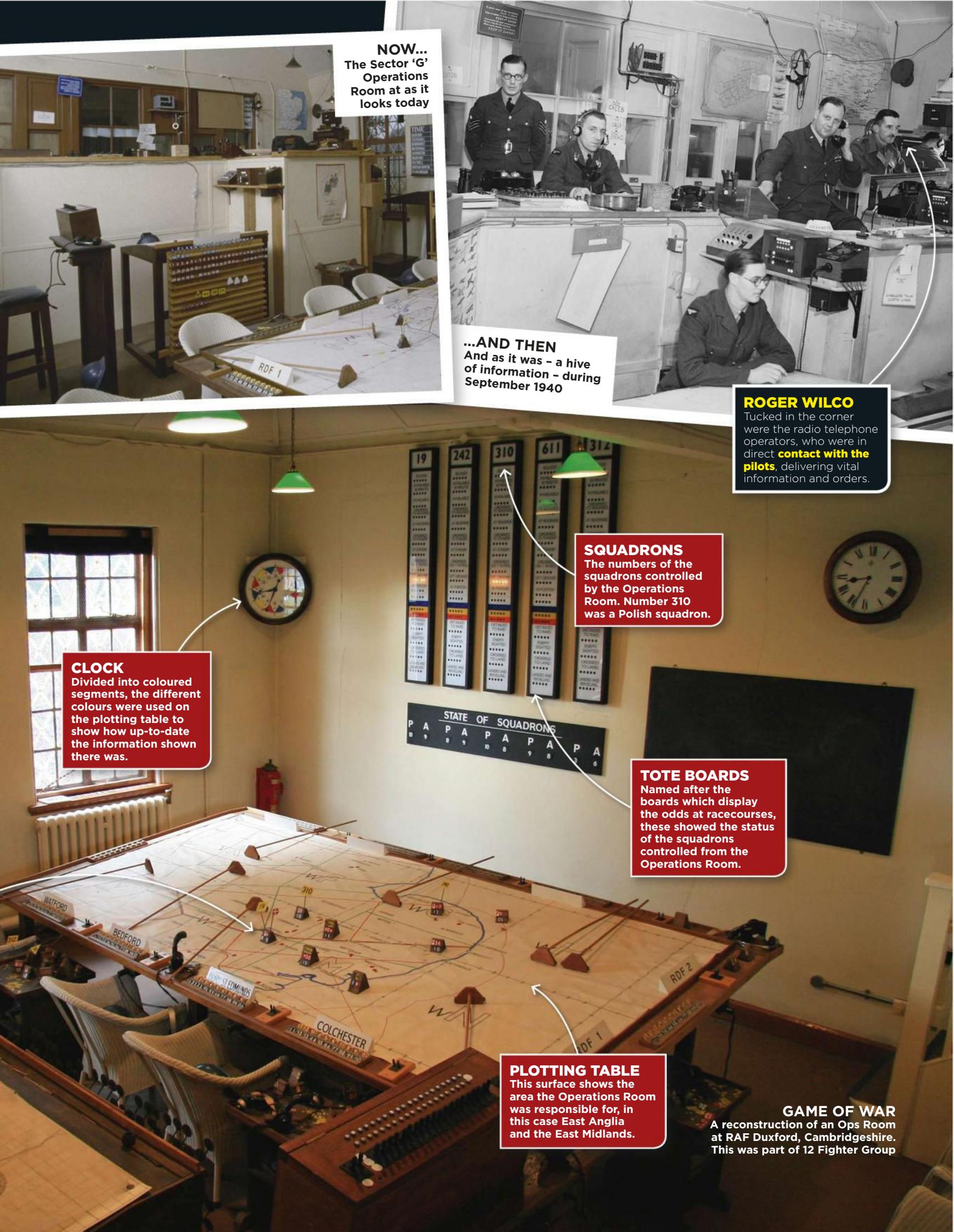
Birdy destroyed six enemy planes in the summer of 1940, before being **shot down** himself. He lived, going on to take out five more aircraft. He had also **survived a crash** earlier in the war, when he'd ended up with Sir McIndoe (see page 111), who gave him a new nose.

## OPERATIONS ROOM DIRECT ACTION

This room will be familiar to anyone who has seen old war films about the RAF. Information from radar stations about aircraft approaching the coastline, and from the Royal Observer Corps about aircraft over land, was assessed and passed onto the Operations Rooms. Details about the number of aircraft, their position, height and bearings were then transferred to counters, which were positioned and moved around the map by the plotters using adjustable rods like croupiers. On the wall, a series of coloured lights indicated the state of readiness of the various squadrons in that particular sector or group.



**ENEMY POSITIONS**  
Wooden blocks were used like counters, to represent the location and size of enemy raids.



**NOW...**  
The Sector 'G'  
Operations  
Room at as it looks today

**...AND THEN**  
And as it was – a hive  
of information – during  
September 1940

### **ROGER WILCO**

Tucked in the corner were the radio telephone operators, who were in direct **contact with the pilots**, delivering vital information and orders.

**SQUADRONS**  
The numbers of the  
squadrons controlled  
by the Operations  
Room. Number 310  
was a Polish squadron.

**TOTE BOARDS**  
Named after the  
boards which display  
the odds at racecourses,  
these showed the status  
of the squadrons  
controlled from the  
Operations Room.

**PLOTTING TABLE**  
This surface shows the  
area the Operations Room  
was responsible for, in  
this case East Anglia  
and the East Midlands.

**GAME OF WAR**  
A reconstruction of an Ops Room  
at RAF Duxford, Cambridgeshire.  
This was part of 12 Fighter Group

**CLOCK**  
Divided into coloured  
segments, the different  
colours were used on  
the plotting table to  
show how up-to-date  
the information shown  
there was.



## BATTLE OF BRITAIN

connected to the aircraft, and the powerful Rolls Royce Merlin engines sputtered into life. Strapping themselves into their seats, the pilots pushed their throttles and the planes taxied forward onto the grass runway. Even this was not without its dangers, as the angle of the plane meant that the pilot couldn't see the ground in front of him. Soon, however, the Spitfires of 92 Squadron were airborne. Now the challenge was to get to the right place, at the right time and at the right height – all the while keeping a careful lookout for enemies. And they got it just right. As they swung round above Ashford, Kent, at about 25,000 feet, they saw the first group of German fighters about 3,000 feet below them, and the bombers with more fighters another 6,000 feet below that.

The German bombers hadn't been finding it easy. They were flying into a strong headwind, which was slowing them down, but even so they weren't too concerned. Convinced that Fighter Command was on its last legs, they thought it would only take a few heavy raids like this to flush out the last few British planes,

**56**

The number of German aircraft that were successfully shot down on 15 September

**RUN FOR YOUR LIVES**  
Pilots on duty could never stray beyond sprinting distance from their aircraft

which could easily be dealt with by the mass of their own fighters that were flying with them. What they didn't know was that by switching their attacks from the airfields of the South East to London a week earlier, they had given Fighter Command vital time to reorganise and recover, and Park and Air Chief Marshall Hugh 'Stuffy' Dowding had used that time brilliantly. At about 11:50, all hell broke loose. Diving into the covering German fighters, 92 Squadron and their partners from 72 Squadron shot down four enemy fighters and got in amongst the bombers. As Park committed more and more fighter squadrons into the fray, the Germans found themselves under continuous attack all the way to London. They were dumbfounded. Where had all these fighters come from? Six



**BATTLE STATIONS**  
RAF and ARP personnel examine Zehbe's downed bomber at Victoria Station

bombers were shot down in an hour and four more so badly damaged that they had to turn round and struggle home. But the rest doggedly pressed on.

### LEFT BEHIND

With their fighter escorts either embroiled in running fights in the skies of southern England or preparing to head home because their fuel was running low, the best hope of survival for the remaining bombers was to stick together, and stick together they did. All except one. The Dornier of 26-year-old Oberleutnant Robert Zehbe from Kiel had developed engine trouble and was soon lagging half a mile behind the rest of the bombers. Flying in an isolated plane with a malfunctioning engine and no fighter protection, Zehbe's crew must have known

**"AS PILOTS SPRINTED TOWARDS THEIR SPITFIRES, MEMBERS OF THE GROUND CREW PRESSED THE STARTER BUTTONS"**



what was in store for them and, sure enough, it happened. Fighter after British fighter swooped on the Dornier in a bid to shoot it down. Planes like this were built to take a lot of punishment but even so, by the time it reached Kennington, two of the crew were dead, two had bailed out and the plane was on fire. Zehbe realised it was the end of the line and, after switching on the plane's autopilot, he bailed out himself.

One of the aircraft attacking the stricken Dornier was a Hurricane piloted by Sergeant Raymond Holmes. Holmes had been born in Cheshire and like Zehbe he was 26. He had already fired two bursts into the bomber, which was now over Victoria and wending its pilotless way in the direction of Buckingham Palace. What happened next has passed into legend. Whether it was by accident or design remains a matter of debate but Holmes flew his Hurricane into the tail of the bomber. The effects were devastating. The Dornier's entire tail snapped off, causing it to somersault through the air. The ends of the wings broke off as well and what remained of the plane crashed onto the forecourt of Victoria Station. But Holmes's Hurricane had also been damaged in the collision and, as it went into a spin, he too was forced to parachute out. His plane crashed nose first into the crossroads of Buckingham Palace Road and Pimlico Road, and virtually disappeared underground. Holmes, who was slightly wounded, floated gently to the ground. Pausing only to kiss two pretty girls, he was taken to the nearby Orange Brewery, where he downed a swift brandy before making for Chelsea Barracks and eventually to his base at Hendon.

## KNIVES OUT

A large crowd was waiting for Zehbe as he reached the ground in Kennington and, after a week of solid German bombing, they were in no mood to buy him a drink. The best that can be said about them was that they were 'hostile'. Some accounts claim he was given a beating by the crowd, which included women wielding pokers and kitchen knives. Others say that he'd already been badly wounded in the air and the crowd's main intention was to carve up his silk parachute. Zehbe was soon rescued by Sergeant Gillies of the Metropolitan Police and driven to hospital in a police van – right across the sacred >



## HEINKEL HE 111 BOMBERS

By September, German crews believed the RAF was as good as finished

### NOT SO INNOCENT

Ostensibly, Germany's Heinkel He 111 was developed as a fast **mail and passenger** aircraft, though the prototype included provisions for **guns and a bomb** load.

## BAILING OUT DOWN BUT NOT OUT

One advantage the RAF enjoyed over the Luftwaffe during the Battle of Britain was that, if an RAF pilot managed to bail out of a damaged plane or make a crash landing, he could rejoin the fight later in another plane. A Luftwaffe crewman in the same situation became a prisoner of war. But bailing out was often easier said than done. Damage or air pressure could make it difficult to open the Perspex canopy over the cockpit. Standing in the open cockpit and jumping was inadvisable as you risked being hit by the plane's tail as it whizzed past, so RAF fighter pilots tended to turn a damaged plane upside down, undo their straps, push and let

gravity do the rest. Nobody liked parachuting into the sea – a pilot who did so normally had a maximum of about four hours in the water before succumbing to hypothermia.

But for most airmen the greatest fear was fire. Both British and German fighter pilots sat in close proximity to over 80 gallons of high-octane fuel. If it caught fire, the pilot had just a few seconds to get out of the blazing plane, and even then he might be left with horrific burns. The pioneering plastic surgery work carried out to help such victims at Archibald McIndoe's burns unit at East Grinstead is famous – his patients dubbed themselves 'the Guinea Pig Club'.



A BIT OF R&R  
McIndoe (in white coat) with his staff and 'guinea pigs'





**NO SIGN OF  
SURRENDER**

Censors removed anything  
that could give away  
Churchill's location from  
this newspaper photo



✓ turf of Kennington Oval. He died the following day. Whether this was from wounds received in the air or inflicted on the ground is not known.

The main group of Dorniers had just finished bombing their target – the railway lines between Clapham Junction and Battersea Power Station – when they came under fresh attack, this time by Douglas Bader's 'Big Wing' of five squadrons of fighters from No 12 Group.

There were now so many planes in the air that the British were actually having to queue up to attack the bombers, which, still in formation, were now heading for home. The Dorniers were badly shot up and full of dead and wounded, but somehow they made it safely back to France. The response of their depleted and exhausted crews to anyone who suggested that the RAF was on the brink of defeat would have been short and to the point.

### RED BULBS

The morning attack had been badly mauled, but more was to come. A second, even heavier, raid was launched in the afternoon. Three waves of aircraft came over on a ten-mile front but once again Fighter Command was able to oppose it in strength, as Park threw everything he had at the raiders. In heavy fighting over South East London and Dartford, his fighters were once again able to get past those of the Germans and attack the bombers. This time, 21 were downed. There was still time to launch two further attacks, on the docks at Portland and on the Spitfire factory in Southampton, but neither did much damage. Churchill watched events develop on the maps and boards at Uxbridge, an unlit cigar clamped between his

jaws. He later wrote: "Presently the red bulbs showed that the majority of our squadrons were engaged. In a little while all our squadrons were flying and some had already begun to return for fuel. All were in the air. The lower line of bulbs were out. There was not one squadron left in reserve."

As the fighting came to an end and the tired RAF pilots returned to their bases, it was time for them to file their combat reports. These were used to help commanders assess what had happened, work out how many enemy aircraft had been destroyed and plan accordingly. It was almost inevitable that an inflated number of enemy planes would be claimed as destroyed for, in the heat of battle, a number of pilots might all damage the same aircraft and assume they were responsible for shooting it down. Indeed, no fewer than nine different pilots 'claimed' Zehbe's Dornier. On this day, the euphoric RAF initially claimed to have destroyed an astonishing 185 aircraft. Park knew it was nonsense but soon the figure was being broadcast around the world. In the event, it turned out that 56 German planes had been shot down for the loss of just 28 British planes.

In terms of kills, it had not been the RAF's most successful day, but it had been an impressive performance nonetheless, and a huge blow to Luftwaffe morale. Mrs Park had her birthday present. ☺

**1,900**

The total number of German aircraft lost during the Battle – the RAF lost over 1,500

**RISING ABOVE**  
The undamaged dome of St Paul's became a symbol of defiance

## THE BLITZ

Before the Battle of Britain ended, bombing of civilian targets began...

The Blitz is the name given to the sustained bombing of British cities that began with the first massed air raid on London on 7 September. It continued in one form or other for eight months, only petering out in May 1941 when the Germans began to prepare their invasion of Russia. London came under sustained attack – it was bombed for 57 consecutive nights and by the end of October more than 250,000 Londoners were homeless. Many other cities were also attacked.

On 14 November 1940, Coventry was virtually destroyed, as 500 German bombers dropped 500 tonnes of high explosives and nearly 1,000 incendiary bombs on the city in ten hours of relentless bombardment. It was a tactic

that was emulated on an even greater scale by the British and Americans later in the war – the week-long bombing of Hamburg in July 1943 caused over 40,000 civilian deaths, the same number of British deaths in the entire eight-month Blitz campaign.

Although the Blitz-proper ended in 1941, sporadic raids would continue. A series of German raids in 1942 targeted historic cities and were nicknamed 'Baedeker raids' after the German guidebooks of that name. In 1944 and 1945, the Germans tried a different tack; the V1 'doodlebugs' and V2 rockets they launched against Britain killed nearly 9,000 civilians.

### EXPERT VIEW

**David Keen**  
The Royal Air Force Museum

## THE GERMANS WERE NOT KEEN ON INVASION

### Why did Britain win the battle?

The determination of pilots from Britain, the Empire and occupied countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia was clearly an important factor. Britain's radar network coupled with the work of the Royal Observer Corps ensured that Dowding and Park could get those pilots in the right place at the right time to intercept the German raiders. Crucially, though, the battle was about keeping the RAF in being and at no time did British fighter losses exceed the numbers of planes being produced to replace them.

### If the Germans had won, did Operation Sealion stand any chance of success?

Neither the German army nor the navy were keen on the idea of invasion. The absence of proper landing craft and the presence of the Royal Navy would have made it a hazardous venture to say the least. But a German victory in the air might have made an invasion unnecessary. Following Dunkirk, German supremacy in the air may well have led Britain to sue for peace.

### Does the Spitfire deserve its reputation as the plane that won the Battle of Britain?

The Spitfire was the glamour plane. It was technologically more advanced than the Hurricane and it was held in high regard by the Germans. Having said that, the Hurricane was more numerous and shot down more German planes. Ultimately though, when discussing the relative merits of the Spitfire, the Hurricane and the Me BF 109, the fact remains that an above-average pilot would shoot down a mediocre pilot whatever plane his opponent was flying.

### Why was the battle so important and why is it still remembered?

Churchill summed that up when he said: "The odds were great; our margins small; the stakes were infinite."



# 2008 ROYAL DUTY

Prince Harry patrols through the deserted town of Garmisir close to FOB Delhi (forward operating base), in Helmand province, southern Afghanistan in 2008. The Prince is the latest in a long line of members of the royal family to have served in the British armed forces. This includes his brother Prince William, their father Prince Charles, as well as their uncles, Princes Andrew and Edward. Indeed, the Queen herself, as the young Princess Elizabeth, served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service during World War II.

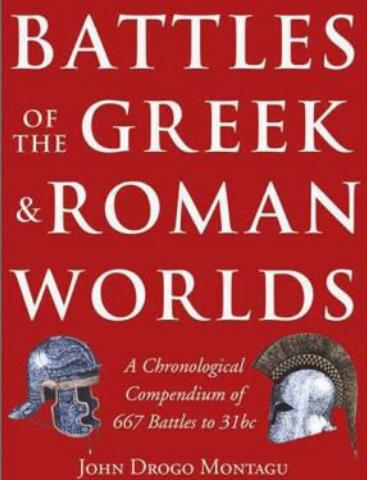




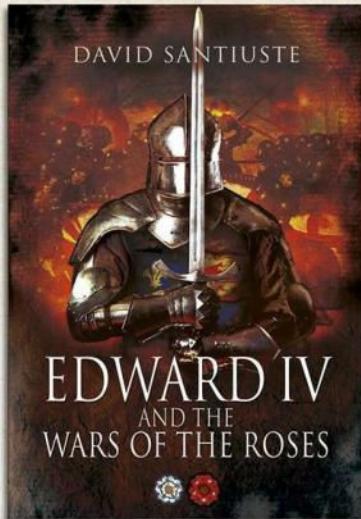
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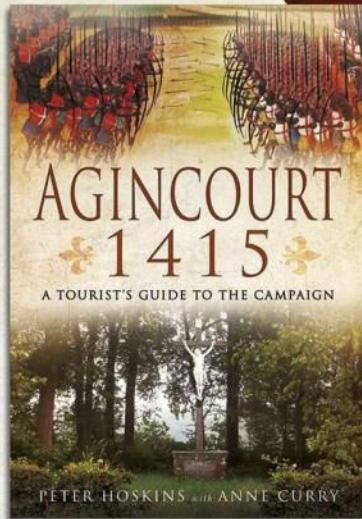
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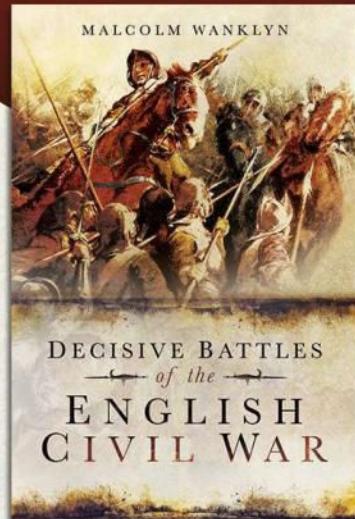
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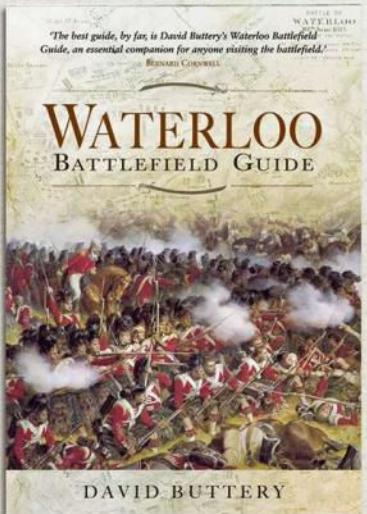
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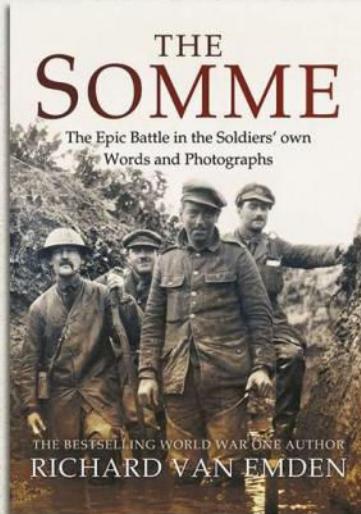
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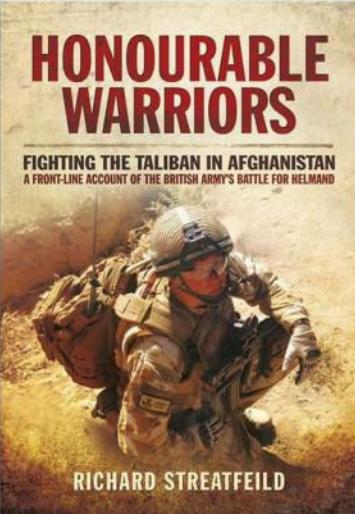
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